

THE IMPACT OF FRANCE ON CONFLICT AND
STABILITY IN THE SOUTH PACIFIC

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Abstract

This thesis investigates the impact of France on conflict and stability in the South Pacific from 1985-2006, with a primary focus on France's two largest regional dependencies: New Caledonia and French Polynesia. It is demonstrated that France had a largely destabilising influence prior to 1988, due to its controversial nuclear testing programme in French Polynesia, its repression of the independence movement in New Caledonia, and its failure to act on the pronounced social and economic imbalances between the local indigenous populations and the settler communities. However, France has played a more positive stabilising role since 1988, by factoring local and indigenous concerns into peace agreements in New Caledonia, disestablishing the French Polynesian nuclear testing programme in 1996, and allowing for greater integration of its dependencies into the region by granting increased autonomy to the territorial governments.

Nonetheless, France's determination to retain sovereignty of its South Pacific dependencies continues to pose a latent threat to stability. The negotiated peace achieved in New Caledonia through the Noumea Accord's deferred referendum on self-determination contrasts starkly with current political instability in French Polynesia, where the power struggle between Independentist and Loyalist parties has again brought into question the impartiality of the French State. While not a theoretical study, the developed hierarchy of variables helps explain France's reluctance to grant sovereignty to its dependencies, and emphasises the importance of 'emotional interest' in the French approach. It is concluded that France's trend towards playing an increasingly stabilising role in its dependencies will be sustained only through an enduring commitment to rebalance territorial inequalities, tolerate pro-independence sentiment, and mediate impartially in local political disputes. Under these circumstances, the stability provided by France and its dependencies in the region would be preferable to the resource and funding vacuums that would be generated by a French withdrawal.

Acronyms and Abbreviations

- ACP:** Asia, Caribbean and Pacific (aid initiative of the European Union)
- AE :** *Avenir Ensemble*, ‘United Future’, a prominent Loyalist political party in New Caledonia
- CEP:** *Centre Nationale des Expérimentations Nucléaires du Pacifique*, ‘National Centre for Pacific Nuclear Experimentation’, the French nuclear testing programme based in French Polynesia from 1966 to 1996
- CFP:** French Pacific Franc, the currency uniquely employed in the French Pacific
- COM:** *Collectivité d’Outre-Mer*, ‘Overseas Collectivity’ of France
- DGDE:** French Development Grant for French Polynesia
- DOM-TOM:** French Overseas Departments and Territories
- EDF:** European Development Fund
- EFO:** *Etablissements Français d’Océanie*, ‘French Establishments of Oceania’, the former name of French Polynesia
- EU:** European Union
- FLNKS:** *Front de Libération Nationale Kanak et Socialiste*, ‘Kanak National Socialist Liberation Front’, the pre-eminent umbrella pro-independence political grouping in New Caledonia composed of a group of smaller pro-independence parties
- FLP:** *Front de Libération de la Polynésie*, ‘French Polynesian Liberation Front’
- FRANZ:** France, Australia and New Zealand trilateral agreement on South Pacific maritime surveillance
- NZAID:** New Zealand Agency for International Development
- PS:** *Parti Socialiste*, ‘Socialist Party’, the pre-eminent centre-left party in metropolitan France
- RAMSI:** Regional Assistance Mission to the Solomon Islands
- RPCR:** *Rassemblement pour la Calédonie dans la République*, ‘Rally for Caledonia in the Republic’, historically the pre-eminent pro-France political party in New Caledonia
- RPR:** *Rassemblement pour la République*, ‘Rally for the Republic’, a centre-right political party in metropolitan France that was headed by Jacques Chirac. The *RPR* has been reformed to become the *UMP*.
- SLN:** *Société Le Nickel*, New Caledonian Nickel Mining Corporation
- SMSP:** *Société Minière du Sud-Pacifique*, ‘South Pacific Mining Corporation’
- SPC:** Secretariat of the Pacific Community
- TOM:** *Territoire d’Outre-Mer*, ‘Overseas Territory’ of France
- UMP:** *Union pour un Mouvement Populaire*, ‘People’s Movement Union’, the pre-eminent centre-right party in metropolitan France
- UN:** the United Nations

Chapter 1: Introduction

The South Pacific¹, a vast expanse of ocean inhabited by a galaxy of small and widely dispersed island states, is home to a diverse range of national interests and perspectives. An important example of an alternative voice in the South Pacific is France, a colonial power that, since 1768, has maintained a regional presence through its three dependencies²: New Caledonia, French Polynesia, and Wallis-and-Futuna. These dependencies have historically been important possessions in France's wider strategic outlook, providing homes and outposts for French communities and military forces, and more notably a testing site for nuclear weapons on French Polynesia's Moruroa and Fangataufa atolls. This long and well-established presence in the region has led to an assertion by France that it is a 'Pacific power,' though this title has not always entailed a sense of camaraderie and common identity with the wider regional community. France's approach to its dependencies has seen them remain distinctly French in their culture and outlook, and their non-sovereign status has historically excluded them from a regional impetus on statehood and co-operation.

Through its engagement in its South Pacific dependencies therefore, France's impact on conflict and stability in the region has been problematic. France's South Pacific policy has long been known for inciting conflict between the indigenous ethnic groups and the comparatively affluent white French settlers who reside in the dependencies. Such conflict can for the most part be described as 'decolonisation-based', as it primarily concerns an opposition between those who want to be granted independence, and those who wish to remain French. The nuclear testing programme in French Polynesia from 1966 to 1996, and New Caledonia's Ouvéa hostage situation in 1988 are examples of France's historical determination to pursue its

¹ For the purposes of this thesis the South Pacific region will be defined as the collective of southern islands and island-groups of the Pacific Ocean and its adjacent seas, including Melanesia, Micronesia, and Polynesia, as well as Australia and New Zealand. 'South Pacific' will be preferred here to 'Oceania': while the two terms are generally used interchangeably, the 'southern' aspect of the former seems to place a greater emphasis on those islands situated *below* the equator, and France's dependencies thus fit well within this category.

² The term 'dependency' is preferred here to that of 'territory' in order to acknowledge the substantial advances in local government and autonomy made in New Caledonia since the Noumea Accord of 1998. The term 'dependency' is also preferred to that of 'country', on the basis that New Caledonia is not a sovereign nation-state with full international personality.

national interests in its dependencies without due regard for local and regional concerns.

Nonetheless, much has changed in the French Pacific since the 1980s, and while tensions continue to surface at the present day, instabilities created from decolonisation-based conflict have significantly diminished. This is due to a transformation in the way France approaches difficulties in its dependencies, as well as a renewed approach to regional issues in general. France can now justify its presence on the basis that it is a constructive regional player, that its Pacific dependencies enjoy the highest living standards of the region, and that in any event, the democratic majorities within its dependencies still wish to remain a part of France.

In light of this, how and to what extent has France impacted on conflict and stability in its South Pacific dependencies? What role has France played in creating or reducing local conflict? How strong is the causality between France's determination to retain control of its dependencies and the emergence of local instability, and why is France so determined to retain this sovereign control? Finally, is the French presence beneficial or detrimental to regional stability?

This thesis will assess the impact of France on conflict and stability in the South Pacific, with a primary focus on the French dependencies of New Caledonia and French Polynesia. This is an important topic for a variety of reasons. Firstly, no significant analysis of France's impact on regional stability has been conducted since the signature of the Noumea Accord in 1998, and since this time much has happened in the Franco-Pacific relationship. It will thus be useful to re-examine the way France approaches the democratic expression of pro-independence sentiment in its dependencies. The referendum on self-determination scheduled for 2019 in New Caledonia could once again reduce the dependency to a climate of ethnic and political violence. This could potentially signal the final nail in the coffin for the legitimacy of France's continued colonial rule in the region, and permanently galvanise regional sentiment against further co-operation.

Secondly, French Polynesia has experienced a prolonged period of political instability, as Oscar Temaru's pro-independence party has clashed with Gaston

Flosse's pro-France party for control of the territorial government. Of particular concern is the way in which France seemingly aligned with Flosse's Tahoea'a party to regain Loyalist control, after Temaru – the Independentist leader – won the presidency in 2004. Tensions remain high: a pro-French President is now back at the helm in French Polynesia, but Independentists feel that their 2004 victory was usurped by the French government and Flosse.

Thirdly, in spite of such concerns France's dependencies have become better integrated within the regional community, having obtained associate member status at the Pacific Islands Forum. France has additionally hosted two France-Oceania diplomatic summits, in an effort to facilitate greater familiarisation with its regional presence and outlook. Through this new focus on multilateral collaboration, France is now providing a more visible and helpful contribution to stability at the regional level.

An up to date analysis is therefore necessary to assess the extent to which France is continuing the trend it began in the late 1980s toward playing a more positive and stabilising role in the South Pacific³.

Chapter Outline

Investigation will firstly begin with summary descriptions of the French dependencies of New Caledonia and French Polynesia, classifying their constitutional status in the French Republic as well as their statutory evolution under French sovereignty. Key concepts pertaining to the French presence in the region will also be defined, in order to set the parameters of colonial conflict situations and the various actors involved.

Chapter two will offer a review of relevant literature pertaining to France's policies in its South Pacific dependencies, and to its regional presence in general. Key works and concepts will be outlined in order to illustrate the central issues associated with

³ To this end, the researcher attended the Institute of Political Studies, *Sciences Po*, in Paris for the duration of the 2005-2006 academic semester. This period of research was beneficial because it a) provided access to extensive documentation on French policy in its Pacific dependencies; b) bypassed the sometimes awkward English language translations or cultural interpretations of the subject matter, c) allowed for interviews with French officials and policymakers, such as former French Ambassador to the South Pacific Bruno Gain and the French Polynesian delegate to the French National Assembly Béatrice Vernaudo; and d) provided an 'outside-in' approach to the discourse surrounding France in the South Pacific. This point is especially important given the significant linguistic bias or cultural misunderstanding that naturally occurs between Francophone and Anglophone states.

French involvement in the region, such as the nuclear testing programme in French Polynesia, the desire to become a global power, and the different perspectives of Loyalists and Independentists on the French approach to its dependencies. Chapter two will point to the lack of current and culturally unbiased literature on France's presence in the South Pacific as a strong justification for this study.

Chapter three seeks to isolate key variables explaining why France has gone against regional trends by not transferring sovereignty to its South Pacific dependencies, and how this determination to retain sovereign control has impacted on local stability. Strategic and economic explanations will be examined, as well as the degree of 'emotional interest' in the French approach, in order to explore the extent to which France's unwillingness to grant independence may be the result of factors operating independently of neorealist or 'rational' decision-making factors.

To this end, chapters four and five are case studies illustrating the impact of France on conflict and stability on New Caledonia and French Polynesia over the time period of 1985-2006. The case studies will qualitatively outline and analyse the policies pursued by France, with the goal of establishing whether its impact on stability has deteriorated or improved over this time. A case study of France's third South Pacific dependency, Wallis and Futuna, will not be offered in this already lengthy study⁴. However, a series of appendices will provide the reader with important supplementary information on the French presence in the region, including French regional diplomacy, military engagement, insights gained through interviews with French officials, and accounts of more nuanced conflict situations.

⁴ Wallis and Futuna form a comparatively small and generally peaceful French dependency, that has not featured largely on the regional or French agenda. A notable exception to this however is a period of unrest that began on the Island of Wallis in September 2005, when an incident involving the Wallisian King's grandson resulted in a faction of the King's supporters engaging in a period of prolonged conflict against a group of royal 'reformist' families. The French State was also involved. See *Pacific Islands Report* September 23 2005, <http://archives.pireport.org/archive/2005/september/09%2D23%2D01.htm> (accessed October 3 2005).

The case studies and examined variables will then lead to an analysis in chapter six of whether France is providing a stabilising or destabilising influence in the current regional environment. It will be argued that France's impact on regional stability has improved in relation to New Caledonia and to wider regional initiatives. However, such progress is tempered to an extent by the experience of French Polynesia. New Caledonia's stability has significantly improved subsequent to the even-handedness brought about by the Matignon Accords of 1988, and the 'shared sovereignty' provisions of the Noumea Accord concluded ten years later. On the other hand, while the French Polynesian economy undeniably benefits from France's commitment to reduce its heavy dependence, France's determination to retain sovereignty has destabilised the local political scene through its repression of pro-independence activity. The political unrest experienced following the territorial elections of 2004 and the brief Presidency of Oscar Temaru raise suspicion over whether France continues to place national 'brotherhood' and unity ahead of a fair and democratic local political system.

It will be concluded in chapter seven that France now has a generally positive influence on stability in the South Pacific, having greatly improved its approach to territorial issues since the end of nuclear testing and the violent events of the 1980s. Nonetheless, France's largely 'emotional' determination to retain sovereignty of its dependencies means that New Caledonia and French Polynesia will continue to be threatened by the potential for decolonisation-based conflict and instability. However, such pressures could conceivably be tolerated in the long term if France achieves its goals of redressing inequalities in its dependencies, and provides the much-needed assistance to a region confronted with the problems of state viability in an interdependent age.

The Status of France's South Pacific Dependencies

While it is common parlance to speak of France's 'overseas territories' in the South Pacific, this appellation is misleading. Indeed, New Caledonia was once an 'overseas territory' but is no longer classified in this way, and the French Ministry of Overseas Departments and Territories (*Ministère des DOM-TOM*) had to accommodate for this change by adjusting its own title to that of the Ministry for Overseas (*Ministère*

d’Outre-Mer). In order to avoid confusion therefore it is more accurate to refer to the French Pacific entities together as *dependencies*.

France’s South Pacific dependencies are integral parts of the French Republic. Under amendments made to the French Constitution in 2003 to decentralise power in France, the South Pacific dependencies are allowed – like other parts of France – some greater measures of local self-regulation. However, the amendments strongly anchored all the French overseas possessions to the Republic by including the names of all ten overseas entities in the text⁵.

New Caledonia⁶

Population:	219,246 (July 2006 est.)
Status:	Collectivité <i>sui generis</i> of France (<i>sui generis</i> Collectivity)
Head of State:	President of the French Republic Jacques Chirac
Head of Government:	Territorial President Marie-Noëlle Thémereau
Land Area:	18,575 sq km
Capital:	Nouméa
EEZ:	1.45 million sq km
GDP per capita:	\$US 15,000 (2003 est.) ⁷

Situated within the Melanesian subgroup of Pacific Island states, New Caledonia was designated by France as an Overseas Country (*Pays d’outre-mer*) in 1999 (Europa, 2006, 1826). Taken possession by France in September 1853, New Caledonia was a French colony until 1946, when it became a *territoire d’outre-mer* (‘overseas territory’ or TOM). New Caledonia remained a TOM until 1999, when the French Parliament unanimously adopted the provisions of the Noumea Accord. As a result of this agreement New Caledonia has the status of *collectivité sui generis* (‘sui-generis

⁵ France’s overseas communes, departments, regions, special-status areas and overseas territories are thus listed under Title XII and XIII of the Constitution as Guadeloupe, Guyana, Martinique, Réunion, New Caledonia, French Polynesia, Mayotte, Saint Pierre and Miquelon, Wallis and Futuna, and the French Austral and Antarctic Territories (TAAF).

⁶ See *Appendix #5: Supplementary Information on New Caledonia, French Polynesia and Wallis and Futuna*.

⁷ CIA World Factbook, New Caledonia, accessed January 24 2007.

collectivity’) and benefits from institutions conceived for it alone, that are being transferred certain competencies of the State in a progressive and irreversible way. The Noumea Accord necessitated an amendment to the French Constitution, which now governs New Caledonia under the new heading “Title XIII: Transitional Dispositions for New Caledonia”⁸.

New Caledonia has one of the largest economies in the Pacific Island region, boasting a slightly higher GDP per capita than New Zealand, however this figure hides New Caledonia’s high dependency on French funding, and significant disparities in income distribution. Its principal export is nickel, accounting for 90% of New Caledonia’s export earnings.

French Polynesia⁹

Population:	274,578 (July 2006 est.)
Status:	<i>Collectivité d’outre-mer</i> of France (Overseas Collectivity)
Head of State:	President of the French Republic Jacques Chirac
Head of Government:	Territorial President Gaston Tong Sang [*]
Total Land Area:	4,176 sq km (118 islands and atolls in five archipelagos)
Capital:	Papeete
EEZ:	5.03 million sq km
GDP per capita:	US \$19,272 (2003) ¹⁰

French Polynesia began as the *Établissements Français d’Océanie* (EFO) in 1880 when Tahiti was annexed by France, after having initially been discovered by Captain Wallis in 1767. The EFO became an overseas territory of France in 1956 alongside New Caledonia, and in 1957 became known as *Polynésie française* / French Polynesia. Since this time it has been granted a series of increasingly advanced

⁸ La Constitution Française de 1958, Titre XIII / The French Constitution of 1958, Title XIII.

⁹ See **Appendix #5: Supplementary Information on New Caledonia, French Polynesia and Wallis and Futuna.**

^{*} Oscar Temaru was Territorial President until December 13 2006, when his government was toppled in a motion of no confidence in the Assembly. On December 26 he was replaced as President by Gaston Tong Sang of the *Tahoera’a Huiraatira* party.

¹⁰ CIA World Factbook, French Polynesia, accessed January 24 2007.

autonomy statutes, with the 2004 statute seeing French Polynesia designated as a *Pays d'outre-mer* ('Overseas Country') within the French Republic (Europa, 2006, 1800) .

French Polynesia's economy is large in relation to other Pacific Island states. However, total financial transfers from France – recently over NZ \$2 billion per annum – have made up around 30 per cent of French Polynesia's GDP¹¹. French Polynesia's current challenge is to reduce its dependence on French transfers by generating income from local industries: tourism is the largest sector of the domestic economy, and black pearls constitute its chief export. The very extensive EEZ makes the fisheries sector also a promising future source of export income, but diminished deep-sea fish stocks affected volume and value in 2005¹².

Definition of Key Concepts

Colonial Power

Wallenstein (2002) states that the distinguishing feature of colonialism is that a metropolis exerts control over a territory populated by people of a different ethnic background, located at a considerable distance from the metropolis. The nature of the relationship between France and its South Pacific dependencies appears to satisfy this definition.

France on the other hand claims that it is *not* colonial, due to its constitutional arrangement whereby French territories are simply geographical extensions of the metropolis, with all the rights and benefits of mainland French citizens. Certainly, it is not the goal of this thesis to antagonise France by referring to it as a 'colonial power,' but it will be treated as such in this investigation. This is because New Caledonia and French Polynesia cannot be defined as 'countries' since France has not granted them full independence. The second is that one of France's South Pacific dependencies – New Caledonia – is on the United Nations list of Countries yet to be decolonised¹³.

Stability

¹¹ Australian Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade Website, accessed January 24 2007.

¹² Ibid.

¹³ See 'The United Nations and Decolonisation', <http://www.un.org/Depts/dpi/decolonization/main.htm>

The Oxford English Dictionary defines stability as the “power of remaining erect; freedom from liability to fall or be overthrown”. A particularly broad interpretation will be taken of stability for the purposes of this thesis: stability will describe the various ways in which a region, state or dependency’s social, economic, political and cultural characteristics are free from frequent and/or sustained adverse change. The extent to which France impacts on the factors contributing to stability in its dependencies and in the wider region will thus be the principal concern of this investigation.

The emphasis will be primarily placed on political and societal stability, as these are the spheres in which tensions in the French Pacific dependencies have for the most part emerged. In the political sphere, protracted periods of political struggle between different parties or societal groups will be determined to decrease local stability if they involve protests, marches, manifestations or other forms of political activity that cause public order to be compromised in some way. It will also be interpreted as destabilising if there is prolonged uncertainty over the legitimacy of the government in power. In contrast, the peaceful political change from one government to another is interpreted to provide a positive test for stability.

At the societal level, instances in which durable tensions or hostilities emerge between different social groups, or instances in which social groups purposefully engage in conflict (defined below) against each other will be interpreted as detrimental to stability. Isolated and/or non-violent instances of small scale tension between members of society will thus not be interpreted as destabilising.

Finally, France’s impact on the combined stability of its local dependencies will in turn influence the stability of the wider South Pacific. In keeping with the above definitions, regional stability will be defined as a general absence of prolonged political and societal tensions or conflict within the regional environment. If France contributes positively to the stability of its dependencies, it will thus contribute to the stability of the South Pacific; if French policy provokes instability in its dependencies it will thus reduce the stability of the region.

Conflict

Conflict will refer to the phenomenon Wallensteen describes as “a social situation in which a minimum of two actors (parties) strive to acquire at the same moment in time an available set of scarce resources” (2002, 16). This will be further narrowed in this investigation to refer only to *internal* conflicts occurring in France’s South Pacific dependencies, and will thus disregard those regional conflicts that occur between two or more dependencies or state actors. Under this definition conflict need not necessarily be violent, and could also express for example the destabilising though non-violent tensions between two or more political or societal groups.

Following on from this, since France and its dependencies are constitutionally one sovereign state, this thesis will determine France’s involvement in conflicts in its dependencies to be *internal*. In this way, the French State (most often embodied through French security forces) can be classified as an actor in a given internal conflict.

Conflict Resolution

Wallensteen defines conflict resolution as “a situation where the conflicting parties enter into an agreement that solves their central incompatibilities, accept each other’s continued existence as parties and cease all violent action against each other” (Wallensteen, 2002, 8). France’s participation in the resolution process between opposing groups in its dependencies will be classified as internal, as France is not an outside or third party, that is to say, another sovereign state. It is also assumed that ultimate responsibility for resolving conflict in its South Pacific dependencies lies with France – the possessor of sovereign control and the guarantor of law and order – and *not* primarily with the dependencies themselves. This investigation will therefore be examining those measures instigated by the French government (and *not* by the territorial governments) to resolve conflict in the dependencies.

Independentist

The term ‘Independentist’ is an appropriation of the French word *indépendantiste*, referring to those who wish for their French Pacific dependency or for all the French Pacific dependencies to be granted independence from France. Conflict and instability in France’s South Pacific dependencies principally stem from tensions between Independentists and Loyalists. Independentists in the French Pacific dependencies are

predominately (though not exclusively) of indigenous origin, hence the *Kanaks* in New Caledonia and the *Maohis* of French Polynesia constitute the bulk of Independentists. They also generally represent the less affluent tiers within local societies. Political parties can also be described as Independentist, such as the *Front de Libération Nationale Kanak et Socialiste* ('Kanak National Socialist Liberation Front' or FLNKS) party in New Caledonia or the *Tavini Huiraatira* ('Serve the People') party in French Polynesia.

Loyalist

At the opposite end of the spectrum, 'Loyalist' refers to those who wish for their French Pacific dependency or for all the French Pacific dependencies to remain a part of France. Loyalists are predominately (though not exclusively) of non-indigenous origin, and thus constitute for the most part those settlers from metropolitan France, former French territories, Asia, or the wider Pacific region who have made a French Pacific dependency their home. At present, Loyalists also constitute a majority of the voting populations in the French Pacific dependencies, and thus hold a majority of political influence. Prominent Loyalist parties in local politics at present are the *Rassemblement-UMP* and the *Avenir Ensemble* ('United Future' or AE) in New Caledonia, and the *Tahoera'a Huiraatira* ('Rally of the People') in French Polynesia. Relative to Independentists, Loyalists generally come from the more privileged classes of a dependency's socioeconomic landscape.

France's South Pacific dependencies are thereby illustrated to be entities under French sovereign control that have historically experienced conflict and instability due in large part to a fundamental opposition between Independentists and Loyalists. Chapter two will now offer an outline of relevant literature pertaining to France's relationship with New Caledonia and French Polynesia in particular, as well to as its interests and interaction with the wider region.

Chapter 2: Literature Review

The literature dealing with the French presence in the South Pacific is typically historical and descriptive, does not focus on France's impact on stability as such, and largely fails to offer justifications for French policies in the region. Literature generally covers issues pertaining to the French presence in the region up to the end of the 1980s. It stems from both Pacific-based (both Anglophone and Francophone) authors and those from metropolitan France, but little literature from within the region has been produced after the mid 1990s. This is undoubtedly because interest in the French presence has dropped following the definitive end of nuclear testing in 1996, and the signing of the Noumea Accord in New Caledonia in 1998.

What is striking about the range of literature available is the degree to which each text is bipartisan, either describing France's engagement in the South Pacific from an entirely Anglo-centric or Pacific Islands perspective on the one hand, or through a Franco-centric prism on the other. With regard to the literature stemming from the French Pacific dependencies themselves, the viewpoints can again be generally divided into one of two camps: those authors of generally European origin (such as the *Demis* of French Polynesia or the *Caldoches* of New Caledonia) who pronounce themselves in favour of the French presence in the region, and those authors of ethnic Polynesian or Melanesian origin who are generally critical of French action. In this way there is little literature that provides a balanced or non-biased assessment of France's impact on stability in the region. It would indeed appear that the effects of cultural heritage and maternal language on one's opinion are large – so large in fact that the most extreme responses appear reminiscent of the Hundred Years War between Great Britain and France.

General Accounts

There are several general accounts and analyses of the French presence in the South Pacific¹⁴. Covered issues include France's initial colonisation of the region, the

¹⁴ See Robert Aldrich (Ed.), *France, Oceania and Australia: Past and Present*, University of Sydney 1991; Stephen Henningham, *France and the South Pacific: a Contemporary Analysis*, Allen & Unwin 1992; Nic Maclellan and Jean Chesneaux, *After Mororua: France in the South Pacific*, Ocean Press 1998; Jean Chesneaux, *France in the Pacific: a Tentative Analysis*, Australian National University 1987; Paul de Deckker et al. (Eds.), *L'Outre-Mer dans le Pacifique: Nouvelle-Calédonie, Polynésie...*

nuclear testing programme in French Polynesia and its impact on the territory, France's international relations and diplomacy in the South Pacific, the independence movement and political violence in New Caledonia and France's approach to these difficulties, and France's involvement in regional organisations such as the Secretariat of the Pacific Community¹⁵ and the Pacific Islands Forum. While these accounts are useful for providing the reader with a background on the main issues surrounding France's presence in the region, they are limited for the purposes of this thesis because they merely provide a political history of events, and in most cases are now out-dated. Though excellent in their accounts of the political violence in New Caledonia and the Matignon Accords of 1988, they do not seek to address the question of whether France has contributed to regional stability, nor do they seek to compare France's approach to conflict resolution in the South Pacific with that of other states. In addition, they are not sufficiently recent works to take account of the important Noumea Accord of 1998, the end of the nuclear testing programme, and recent political tensions in French Polynesia. The need for a more recent analysis is thereby illustrated.

Accounts of French Regional Policy

There are several academic works that focus more specifically on France's policy in the South Pacific, and attempt to explain France's actions in the region with reference to its foreign policy tradition and strategic interests¹⁶. While none of these works are recent they are nonetheless useful for this thesis because they illustrate the underlying principles of French foreign policy, and relate these principles back to the domestic political situations in France such as the grand projects of the Fourth and Fifth Republics. This is important because it will help to convey the extent to which France's impact on regional security is consistent with its wider strategic outlook, and

Française, Wallis-et-Futuna, L'Harmattan 2003; République française: Ministère de l'Outre-mer, *Nouvelle-Calédonie*, Université de la Nouvelle-Calédonie 2003; Wayne Stuart McCallum, 'French Relations in the South Pacific', *Contemporary Review* 1993.

¹⁵ The Secretariat of the Pacific Community (SPC) was formerly known as the South Pacific Commission.

¹⁶ See Myriam Dornoy-Vurobaravu, *Policies and Perceptions of France in the South Pacific: New Caledonia and Vanuatu*, Institute of Pacific Studies 1994; Isabelle Cordonnier, *La France dans le Pacifique Sud: Approche Géostratégique*, Publisud 1995; Stephen Bates, *The South Pacific Island Countries and France: A Study of Inter-State Relations*, Australian National University 1990; Maclellan and Chesneaux 1998.

will facilitate conclusions on whether or not France's approach to conflict resolution in the region is well-suited to the exigencies of the South Pacific.

Policies and Perceptions of France in the South Pacific by Myriam Dornoy-Vurobaravu

Dornoy-Vurobaravu's work outlines France's foreign policy trends in the Pacific by linking it to the wider foreign policy principles of the French Fifth Republic, and provides a balanced account of France's approach to the region, as well as regional perspectives of France. Her work is useful for the purposes of this thesis because it does not attempt to examine France's policies from a purely Pacific regional perspective. Instead, Dornoy-Vurobaravu outlines France's approach to such contentious policy issues as nuclear testing, political violence in New Caledonia, and regional organisations, and then contextualises this approach with France's motivations – both domestic and in the realm of foreign affairs – for enacting such policies. She then describes the resulting relationship between France and the states of the Pacific region, showing how policy-makers in Paris were pressured into modifying and evolving France's Pacific outlook due to the fierce opposition it came to encounter from the regional collective. Dornoy-Vurobaravu highlights the significant improvements that France has made in its approach to the Pacific after 1988, and concludes with some lucid suggestions for French Pacific policy in future, some of which have since come to fruition after her work was published in 1994.

Dornoy-Vurobaravu provides an explanation for French policies in the region with reference to the right-left dichotomy of French domestic politics, the historical priorities of French foreign policy and the concept of *francophonie*. French policies towards the South Pacific are defined in the preface as based on foreign principles defined by de Gaulle when he came to power in 1958, namely the maintenance of French sovereignty and a world status for France (1994, ix). Dornoy-Vurobaravu states that French foreign policy is characterised by a process of consensus among major political parties. This is important because the style and severity of the French approach to dealing with conflict in the South Pacific has changed in accordance with the evolving French political spectrum. Dornoy-Vurobaravu illustrates however that certain aspects of French policy have remained the same regardless of whether Socialists or Conservatives are in power in France, such as the essential point of the maintenance of the French presence in the Pacific (1994, ix). Governments of the

Fifth Republic have consistently aimed to increase French international prestige and to ensure that France differs from other European powers by preserving its territorial and other overseas interests. They have also tried to play a leading role in world affairs – a role that Dornoy-Vurobaravu believes may well be above France's capacity to sustain (1994, ix).

For the future, Dornoy-Vurobaravu states that the perspective of a new emerging relationship with the South Pacific is compatible with the design to expand France's influence in the world, and in so doing, assert its national sovereignty. France is portrayed as having the potential to further legitimise its presence in the region by offering financial and technical assistance to further Pacific Island development. However, she suggests that an over-arching framework approach for France's foreign policy in the Pacific is unlikely to be compatible with the needs of Pacific Island states engaged in state-building: a pragmatist policy approach that is better adapted to their needs would be preferable. Finally, Dornoy-Vurobaravu believes that direct French control and exclusive responsibilities over its territories are not acceptable to the region in the 1990s, and that by deciding to become a cooperative partner rather than a direct controller, France can contribute positively to the development of the South Pacific. She warns, however, that any backtracking or reversal of measures undertaken to encourage political advancement in the territories would only compromise the French presence in the South Pacific (1994, 29).

The principal weakness of her work is that it is now out-dated: as it was published in 1994 it does not refer to the important Noumea Accords of 1998. The situation has also changed significantly in French Polynesia, with an increasingly competitive pro-independence movement that seeks to achieve the same attention and political advances accorded to New Caledonia. Furthermore, while it is comprehensive in its reference to French policies enacted in the region up to 1994, it has no specific focus as to how France sought to deal with violent conflict in its territories, and makes no conclusion on France's contribution to the security of the Pacific.

***La France dans le Pacifique Sud : Approche Géostratégique* [France in the South Pacific : A Geostrategic Approach] by Isabelle Cordonnier**

Cordonnier's work provides an extremely detailed and analytical account of France's role in the South Pacific region up to 1995, including the nuclear testing programme

in French Polynesia and political instability in New Caledonia. It also describes the difficulties France encountered in defending its national interests in a region united in opposing it. Cordonnier tends to be more supportive of French action in the South Pacific than Dornoy-Vurobaravu, pointing to faults in actions taken by Pacific Island countries in response to French policy as evidence that the situation is not as black and white as it may appear. Once again, the bulk of Cordonnier's work is similar to that of numerous other authors in its accounts of the particularly tense events of the 1980s and the way France dealt with them, but was written before the Noumea Accords of 1998 and the important political changes in French Polynesia in 2004.

In the first chapter Cordonnier justifies her work by stating that the South Pacific up to that time had largely been ignored by French scholars and analysts (1995, 15). Indeed, Cordonnier's work is important because it is a French-language document from a Francophone analyst, who criticises in an impartial fashion the French approach to situations of tension and political conflict in the region, while accounting for French action with an 'insider' account of France's national strategic imperatives of the time.

Cordonnier is also one of the few authors encountered to suggest that the actions of successive French governments have been the object of an excessive attention on the part of regional actors. This has been to the detriment of the activities of other French entities in the region such as churches or scientific research bodies, and therefore such "positive coefficients" of French action in the region have been most often ignored. With regard to the nuclear testing programme, Cordonnier posits that regional opposition was founded on an "irrational fear" (1995, 21). She surmises the relationship between France and the South Pacific in the period between 1962 and 1988 as one of "mutual misunderstanding", presenting France not so much as an outsider eager to exploit the region for its own ends, but more as a state whose image became marred through its failure to define a clear and cohesive strategic policy, and through a weak and reactive diplomatic effort that failed to secure legitimacy (1995, 20). Most other authors however perceive this relationship as being owed solely to the French refusal to take account of regional sentiment *vis-à-vis* nuclear testing and indigenous claims for independence.

For the future, Cordonnier questions whether the French presence is linked to the maintaining of French sovereignty in its French territories. While she offers the examples of independent African states and Vanuatu as evidence that the French presence may continue even after independence, she underlines that France will only allow itself to maintain an influence in an independent New Caledonia or French Polynesia if it draws sufficient economic or political benefits from the arrangement. In any event, she posits that the French presence will probably remain in the region, given that none of the three territories are able to break away at this time (1995, 201). Cordonnier concludes that the image of France in the South Pacific has very clearly improved since 1988 and the assault on the grotto of Ouvéa, and that the year 1988 marks an incontestable breakaway for the French presence in the South Pacific. While praising France's new policy of openness, Cordonnier contextualises the contemporary French role in the region with the end of the Cold War, and the severe economic dependence encountered by the majority of states in the region. Poor and reliant on aid, the South Pacific seems to offer France the possibility to set in practice a genuine policy of co-operation, leaning on the population of its territories as much as on its scientific experts in the region (1995, 209).

Like the work of Dornoy-Vurobaravu, Cordonnier's 1995 work does not provide a sufficiently recent analysis of France's role in regional security. It does, however, provide excellent insight into the way France created a substantial amount of conflict in the pre-Matignon Accord era. Nonetheless, the out-datedness of the work highlights the necessity for a fresh analysis that reassesses the recent French effort at bringing about stability in its dependencies and in the wider region.

The South Pacific Island Countries and France by Stephen Bates

While now outdated, Stephen Bates provides an excellent critical analysis on France's role in the Pacific region. Bates begins with an important outline of the reasons why France wishes to maintain its presence in the South Pacific:

1. Its desire to become a medium-sized nuclear world power and have a presence in all of the world's oceans;
2. Its reluctance to lose sovereignty over any more of its territories after the crisis in Algeria;
3. The strategic military presence that France's South Pacific territories provide;

4. Benefits obtained from the territories such as the extensive nickel deposits in New Caledonia and the vast Exclusive Economic Zones;
5. Its self-image as a guarantor of stability in the South Pacific;
6. Its assertion that its presence provides a counterbalance to the hegemonic aspirations of other major players in the region;
7. France's presence has benefited the inhabitants of its territories with superior living standards and GNP to virtually all other countries in the Pacific region;
8. France's continued presence is the wish of the majority of those who inhabit the French Pacific.

However, Bates critiques many of the above reasons as being hollow justifications, purposefully engineered to bolster the perceived importance of the French presence in the region (1990, 23). Following on to discuss the way in which France has aggravated or been the cause of problems in the South Pacific, Bates provides a comprehensive analysis of the issues surrounding France's Pacific nuclear testing programme. He attributes Pacific Island states' hostility to France as stemming from "French indifference to their health and livelihood" and from "the frustration they feel at seeing a metropolitan power usurp their right to determine what happens in their region" (1990, 41).

Following the victory of the centre-right coalition under the leadership of Jacques Chirac in France in 1986, Bates lucidly describes France's new policies concerning both New Caledonia and its relations with the Pacific as "two seemingly contradictory faces in the region: a conciliatory face in the South Pacific and a hard-line face in New Caledonia" (1990, 93). This, he believes, stemmed from France no longer being able to placate the South Pacific Forum states with a policy of reforms in New Caledonia, and therefore hoping to take advantage of their extreme economic dependence (and to mute their protests in the international arena) by providing them with financial and technical assistance (1990, 96). In combination with the appointment of Gaston Flosse as Secretary of State for the South Pacific, Bates states that "for the first time French foreign policy in the South Pacific was to follow a well-thought out plan of action. France was to take the initiative rather than simply react as it had done previously in an ad-hoc and incoherent way" (1990, 98). In spite of this, he concludes that the initiatives undertaken by the Chirac government in both New Caledonia and in the South Pacific region generally had negative consequences for the stability and unity of the region (1990, 113).

Bates concludes in a manner consistent with the majority of authors, positing that in the 1980s the French presence had a divisive and destabilising effect on inter-state relations, but that the return to power of the Socialists in 1988 and the subsequent signing of the Matignon Accords heralded in a new spirit of co-operation for France in the region. According to Bates however, problems associated with the French presence still remain:

The real problem with the French presence in the South Pacific is that in any conflict between its national security interests in Europe and regional interest in the South Pacific the former will inevitably take precedence, as was demonstrated in the *Rainbow Warrior* incident. Until recently there had been no attempt by the French to comprehend the dynamic of regional relations...The conflict between France and the independent Island states of the South Pacific is a contest between two diametrically opposed perceptions of world order, a contest between the French view that it is legitimate for a larger power to impose its will on small states and the view of the Island states that what happens in their region should be determined by them (1990, 137).

Bates' work provides an excellent account of France's impact on the South Pacific environment up to 1990, with comprehensive information covering the nuclear testing programme, the problems in New Caledonia, diplomacy, and the political changes in metropolitan France that affected these crucial aspects of French policy in the region. However, as it was published in 1990, it does not cover the Noumea Accords, nor any more modern aspect of France's policies in the region.

***After Moruroa: France in the South Pacific* by Nic Maclellan and Jean Chesneaux**

Nic Maclellan and Jean Chesneaux form what would appear to be an ideal combination for writing about France in the South Pacific because the former is an Australian journalist, and the latter is a French academic. In this way, the crucial difficulty posed by the majority of related literature – a clear bias along cultural lines – is overcome by the fact that both the Pacific region and France are represented in the analysis. This is further strengthened by the fact that their works have been published both in French and in English, meaning that their views are not principally intended to be read by one audience or the other. While both authors have published individually on the subject, their first joint oeuvre in 1992 – *La France dans le Pacifique: de Bougainville à Mururoa* – was published in French, and their second work of 1998 *After Moruroa: France in the South Pacific* was published in English.

Beginning with an analysis of France's motivations for a presence in the region, Maclellan and Chesneaux contend that beyond France's institutional interests

(military, cultural, scientific, technical and economic), the governments of the Fifth Republic have had an overarching vision or “Grand Design”: the concept of promoting the interests of the French state as paramount at the centre of a hostile environment. This is explained with reference to France’s desire to recover from humiliating defeats suffered in its former colonial territories of Indochina and Algeria (1998, 76), France’s plan to establish itself as a *puissance mondiale moyenne* – a medium-sized world power, and the promotion or dissemination of French language and culture as an affair of state under the concept of *la francophonie* (1998, 84).

Maclellan and Chesneaux describe France’s approach to decolonisation as the elimination of social relationships of a colonial character, but without questioning the sovereignty of France. This is a crucial point because it demonstrates why the Pacific Islands region has been so critical of France’s approach to decolonisation: the experience of decolonisation in the region has generally implied not only the elimination of the colonial dominance of one group over another, but also the granting of independence to the former colony and the eventual withdrawal of the colonial power. The French interpretation of decolonisation explains the way the French government developed the Matignon Accords in New Caledonia in 1988, allowing for a proposed act of self-determination conducted under the provisions of Article 53 of the French Constitution, rather than under the principles and practice of decolonisation established by the United Nations (1998, 245).

Maclellan and Chesneaux provide an interesting insight into France’s hostility toward the opposition it encounters from the wider region. While France lashes out at a region perceived to be united in opposition against it, Maclellan and Chesneaux describe this hostility as a combination of paranoia and an inferiority complex:

This arrogant [French] attitude feeds on an oppositional culture towards an English-speaking environment which is defined as being hostile in principle, and which is felt to be surrounding French territory on all sides. In this context, the memory of 19th century colonial conflicts and past defeats suffered by France, while largely forgotten, remains very much alive. This is combined with a focus on century-old religious antagonism between Protestantism and Catholicism (with the latter identified in the Pacific with France, its natural protector). In reality, this identification is a myth. French-speaking Protestants are in the majority in French Polynesia, and English-speaking Catholics are numerous in the Solomon Islands, Papua New Guinea, Kiribati, Australia and other Pacific countries (1998, 91)

The fact that Jean Chesneaux is French lends credence to the possibility that it is perhaps not so much an issue of Pacific Islands prejudice to France as it is an issue of French hostility towards an English-speaking group of countries by which it feels threatened.

Maclellan and Chesneaux use the example of the riots of October 1987 to illustrate the severe social imbalances the CEP has brought to the territory, which were the result of a more latent crisis in Papeete brought about by the ‘boom and bust’ implantation and subsequent dismantling of the testing programme (1998, 121). Maclellan and Chesneaux provide much more nuanced descriptions of conflict in the French Pacific dependencies than other authors, including the involvement of Wallisian youths in the violence in New Caledonia in the mid to late 1980s, and the riots in Tahiti in 1991 and 1995 (1998, 135). In their chapter on New Caledonia, Maclellan and Chesneaux mention the “obsessive distrust” of the European population toward the French Left, and state that the pro-independence Europeans were increasingly marginalised amongst the white Loyalist population, being insulted, threatened, and sometimes physically attacked (1998, 135).

Maclellan and Chesneaux conclude that “if France is to retain any influence in the Pacific, it must address the issues that will most affect the islands: democracy and self-determination, economic and social development, and cultural identity” (1998, 225). While France’s relations with both its own dependencies and the other states of the region have generally improved, they believe that “France can intervene in Pacific affairs, can make a valuable, indeed unique, contribution to the region. But it cannot be part of the region – it can only participate from outside the region, as others do” (1998, 260). *After Moruroa* is a greatly beneficial work for the purposes of this thesis and includes comprehensive detail on all aspects of France’s involvement in the region up to 1998, while admittedly portraying events from a somewhat Pacific Islands perspective. It is unfortunate however that in the year of the book’s publication, the vitally important Noumea Accords of 1998 were signed: *After Mororua* is therefore lacking in its ability to accurately reflect the more recent political situation of France in the South Pacific.

Critical / Anti-French Authors

Literature originating from the South Pacific – excluding literature produced by French Loyalists – is typically critical of all aspects of France’s engagement in the region, depicting France as a destabilising element and detrimental to regional security¹⁷. Authors focus on the nuclear testing programme in French Polynesia, the policies of successive French governments towards New Caledonia, France’s role in regional organisations, and regional diplomatic initiatives to illustrate France’s disregard for the wishes of South Pacific countries in pursuing its policy objectives. The extent of such criticism varies, with leaders of the independence movements in the French territories taking the most vehemently opposed stance. Oscar Temaru for example asks the following:

Does France still believe in the theory of “power at the point of a gun” as in the past? Will France be blinded by the theory of “might is right” to such an extent as to repeat the disastrous experiences of Vietnam and Algeria? ... Is France trying to provoke the exasperation of the Polynesian race by turning a deaf ear, so that they can later justify public violence with the common excuse of maintaining colonial “public order”? Does France think it can suffocate, by misinforming and intoxicating the Maohi people, Polynesia’s aspiration for Independence? (1988, 277)

Susana Ounei-Small recounts the brutality of the French military forces during the hostage situation at Ouvéa:

After the killing, people saw army helicopters flying overhead with nets hanging underneath and thought they were moving their equipment to another part of the island. In fact, the bodies of our nineteen martyrs were swinging above them...They were dumped in a tin shed at the airport and left for three days...All the bodies, except Alphonse’s, were bloated and badly infested with maggots. Most were burnt and/or mutilated beyond recognition. They were buried in a mass grave in Hwadrilla...”(1992, 174)

She resolutely concludes that “[t]he Matignon Accords were signed in blood – the blood of my brothers and cousins and nephews from Ouvéa. Beneath the appearance of a peaceful agreement lies extreme state violence” (1992, 174). Ounei-Small does

¹⁷ For general examples see Susanna Ounei-Small, ‘Kanakya: The ‘Peace’ Signed with Our Blood’ in *Tu Galala: Social Change in the Pacific*, David Robie (Ed.), Bridget Williams & Pluto 1992; Oscar Temaru, ‘Maohinui (French Polynesia): the need for independence’ in *French Polynesia*, Nancy J. Pollock and Ron Crocombe (Eds.), University of the South Pacific 1998; Stephen Henningham, *France and the South Pacific: Problems and Prospects*, Australian National University 1989; Helen Fraser, *Your Flag’s Blocking Our Sun*, ABC Enterprises 1990; Marie-Thérèse and Bengt Danielsson, ‘Tahiti: In Bondage to the Bomb’ in David Robie (Ed.) 1992; John Connell, *New Caledonia: The Matignon Accord and the Colonial Future*, University of Sydney 1988.

not approach the Matignon Accords with the optimism of other authors, who may not categorically support the agreement but who view it nonetheless as a way of bringing about an end to protracted violence in the territory¹⁸.

In the post-Noumea Accord era however there has been a significant decline in Anglophone Pacific-based literature analysing the French presence in the region, and consequently a decline in critical analysis and comment. Literature stemming from the French Pacific and from France continues to be published on France's role in the region and provides detailed analysis of the Noumea Accord and recent political developments in French Polynesia. However, the francophone nature of such literature makes it naturally more supportive of the French presence¹⁹. In light of this lack of literature therefore, an up-to-date, Anglophone and Pacific-based analysis of France's presence in the region would be of great benefit to the diversity and balance of the current pool of research.

Pro-French / Loyalist Authors

Pro-French or Loyalist authors tend to fall into two subgroups which, while varying in terms of where they reside and where their immediate ancestry lies, both run against the dominant Pacific-based discourse which is critical of France's actions in the region.

The first subgroup is composed of mainly white or half-caste inhabitants of New Caledonia or French Polynesia such as the *Caldoche* or *Demi* groups. This subgroup generally supports the Gaullist/conservative administrations in Paris, who generally want the territories to remain French. Conversely, this subgroup is suspicious of Socialist governments, who are more favourable to the idea of granting independence

¹⁸ See Lafleur, J. *L'Assiégé: Vingt-cinq Ans de Vie Politique*. Paris : Plon, 2000. Pitoiset, A. *Nouvelle-Calédonie : Horizons Pacifiques*. Paris: Autrement, 1999; Christnacht, A. *La Nouvelle Calédonie*. Paris : La documentation Française, 2004.

¹⁹ See Paul De Deckker, 'New Caledonia: yesterday, today and tomorrow,' Paper presented at the Otago Foreign Policy School, Dunedin 2004; Michel Pérez, 'From Franconesia to Euronesia: What Future for France, and the European Union, in the South Pacific?' in *The Journal of Pacific Studies* 27, no. 1, 2004: 95-108.

to the territories. Views typifying this subgroup are those of New Caledonian Loyalist politician Jacques Lafleur, or New Caledonian academic Michel Perez²⁰.

***L'assiégé: Vingt-cinq Ans de Vie Politique* [The Besieged : Twenty-Five Years of Political Life] by Jacques Lafleur**

Jacques Lafleur's work is important for the purposes of this thesis as he is the only living person to have been involved in the signature of both the Matignon Accords of 1988 and the Noumea Accord of 1998.

A principal strength of Lafleur's work is that he is a long-time citizen of New Caledonia and can hence provide useful accounts of conflict situations in the dependency, particularly in instances in which he himself may have been directly involved, and which cannot be provided in the works of academics and French politicians. Interestingly, he makes reference to the influence of the *pieds-noirs* in the New Caledonian tensions, claiming the former Algerian citizens aggravated the Caledonians of European origin and anti-independence Kanaks by telling them that France had proceeded in exactly the same way in order to give independence to Algeria – a process which resulted in them having to flee their homes and start afresh in another French territory (2000, 57). In addition, Lafleur believes that the *pieds-noirs* contribution to the dispute meant that “when we proposed to the population to search for an agreement for peace and living harmoniously, the echo we got back was this: who is the imbecile who can believe that that the broken engagements of the Evian Accords of Algeria would be upheld in New Caledonia” (2000, 57).

Similarly, whereas the majority of Pacific-based authors depict former Kanak ‘security chief’ Éloi Machoro as a martyr after he was assassinated by a French sniper unit, Lafleur is able to recount an incident when Machoro and his men took control of the village of Thio: “he had humiliated the gendarmes by removing their clothes and, dressing himself in the uniform of the boss, he urinated on the rest of their uniforms. Day after day, he tortured, psychologically at least, the Polynesians and the Wallisians of the village, in such a way that they no longer knew whether they would ever leave Thio alive” (2000, 68). Lafleur uses this as an example to illustrate that intellectuals

²⁰ Lafleur, Jacques. *L'Assiégé: Vingt-cinq Ans de Vie Politique*. Paris: Plon, 2000; Pérez, Michel. "From Franconesia to Euronesia: What Future for France, and the European Union, in the South Pacific?" *The Journal of Pacific Studies* 27, no. 1 (2004): 95-108.

working on solutions for the crisis from Paris do not understand “the reality of the terrain, the situation on the ground, in what conditions the populations are living, and if they would have to suffer or not from the situations they propose” (2000, 69).

Lafleur purports to be working towards the well-being of all New Caledonians, be they Caldoche, Kanak or otherwise. Nonetheless, he exhibits patent hostility toward French Socialist administrations. Furthermore, it would appear that Lafleur makes many references to the morally indefensible actions of the Independentists, while not balancing these with the similar actions of the Loyalists. He describes how during the electoral campaign of 1984 the Kanaks psychologically and physically tortured their own people in order to enforce the ‘active boycott’ in the coming elections, whilst burning the houses and crops of European farmers isolated in the bush (2000, 109). He does not provide any real accounts of the Caldoche populations applying similar forms of pressure on their own people, as have already been illustrated in the recent work of Maclellan and Chesneaux.

***La Démocratie Massacrée en Nouvelle-Calédonie : Témoignage* [Massacred Democracy in New Caledonia : An Eye-Witness Account] by General Michel Franceschi**

Another pro-French viewpoint is that of Michel Franceschi, a French Army General who was posted with the task of restoring law and order in New Caledonia at the time of the violent tensions in the 1980s. Franceschi typifies the views of the extreme right with regard to France’s involvement in resolving conflict in the region, demonstrated in the first instance by the title of his book, *Massacred Democracy in New Caledonia*. If the works of militant Kanak activists can be said to be situated at one end of a sliding scale – believing that a fair-handed response from France to the situation in New Caledonia has not yet arrived, and that France is yet to place the Kanak people on an equal social and economic footing with their Caldoche and French countrymen – then the view of Franceschi is to be found at the polar opposite end of that scale. Franceschi believes that the Noumea Accord of 1988 is a “political monster from the mouths of eccentric ideologues and too easily accepted by a local Loyalist body nothing more than the shadow of itself” (1998, 51). Therefore, he systematically rebukes the French and New Caledonian politicians and negotiators, whom he believes to have “scorned universal suffrage” in allowing the dependency the future possibility of independence.

As such, he calls Jean-Marie Tjibaou a “separatist chief” (1998, 83), and labels the FLNKS an organisation “of terrorist and revolutionary character seeking to take control by recourse to violence” (1998, 94). He describes French Socialist High Commissioner to New Caledonia Edgard Pisani as “sad” and “pitiful,” and brands his independence-in-association plan for the territory as “chimerical” (1998, 80). In short, Franceschi argues that throughout the duration of the Socialists’ time in government in Paris they deliberately attempted to overturn the established democratic order in New Caledonia, in order to give the power to a violent minority.

Franceschi’s approach to those states sympathising with the Kanak cause is of a similar calibre. He accuses the French Socialists of “complicity with the countries of the region who incessantly try to boot us out of the South Pacific”, believing that New Caledonia became a French possession in 1853 to the irk of the “Anglo-Australians”. Moreover, he argues that Australia, having never pardoned this acquisition, has allowed the French consulate in Sydney to become “a quasi-official letterbox of the FLNKS” and a platform for the plotting of “the diverse agents of anti-France”. The chapter finishes with reference to Australia leading a “sort of new Hundred-Years War” (1998, 145).

Contrary to the majority of authors, Franceschi believes that the Kanaks are indifferent to the prospect of independence, and that ultimately they should realise that it is in their interest to remain French. He offers the examples of Papua New Guinea, Vanuatu and the Solomon Islands as examples of the “socio-economic regression” and “deficit in the field of human rights” that directly results from the granting of independence in the Pacific (1998, 51).

Franceschi provides undeniably the most extreme right interpretation of France’s role in New Caledonia and in the wider South Pacific region. Indeed, while most authors would describe the events in New Caledonia during the period of the Chirac administration and the Pons Statute as overly repressive, it is in fact the sole period of France’s action with which Franceschi displays the slightest agreement. His searing opposition to the FLNKS is given, and yet he is equally critical of the local Loyalist population – represented through the RCPR – in their consent to the Noumea Accord. What conclusions can be drawn from his work? The first is that it is fraught with

emotionally impassioned (and often highly entertaining) rhetoric that damages the credibility of his well-detailed account of events. His persistence with the term “Canaque” – traditionally a racial slur that has for a long time been abandoned in favour of the accepted term “Kanak” – is concerning. Nonetheless, *Massacred Democracy* provides ample information about the military tactics employed in New Caledonia, an excellent chronology of the significant instances of violent conflict, and an accurate depiction of the interplay between the politicians and bureaucrats from metropolitan France and those from New Caledonia in the resolution process.

New Caledonia

A substantial part of all literature bearing on the subject of France in the South Pacific consists of eyewitness accounts and academic analyses of the political situation in New Caledonia, and the French governmental response to the violence and tensions experienced there. The situation in New Caledonia was at times at the forefront of the global media agenda and consequently a large and widely varying body of literature has emerged. The majority of such literature covers the political events of the mid to late 1980s, when the violence in the territory was at its most severe. Issues covered in this time period include the creation of the FLNKS party and the ‘active boycott’ of territorial elections in 1984, the failed independence-in-association plan of Socialist High Commissioner Edgard Pisani, the assassination of Kanak militant figurehead Éloi Machoro in 1985, the inscription of New Caledonia on the United Nations list of territories to be decolonised in 1986, the referendum on self-determination of 1987, the setting in place of the ‘Pons Statute’, the hostage-taking at Ouvéa, and the agreement between the French State, the RPCR and the FLNKS in the signing of the Matignon Accords²¹.

The interpretations of the events in New Caledonia are diverse and varied. With regard to the Ouvéa hostage-taking²² for example, most Pacific-based authors and

²¹ For useful historical accounts read Alain Christnacht, *La Nouvelle Calédonie*, La documentation Française 2004; Helen Fraser, *New Caledonia: Anti-Colonialism in a Pacific Territory*, Australian National University 1988; Myriam Dornoy, *Politics in New Caledonia*, Sydney University Press 1984; Anne Pitoiset, *Nouvelle-Calédonie : Horizons Pacifiques*, Autrement 1999; Alan Clark, *The Politics of Electoral Duality Experience and Elections in New Caledonia*, NZIIA 1987; John Connell, *New Caledonia: The Matignon Accord and the Colonial Future*, University of Sydney 1988; Stephen Henningham, *France and the South Pacific: a Contemporary Analysis*, Allen & Unwin 1992.

²² The Ouvéa hostage taking situation will be explained in detail in Chapter Four: Case Study of New Caledonia.

many French authors perceive the military raid on the grotto in which the French gendarmes were being held as unnecessarily brutal, even a “cynically timed” manoeuvre of then Prime Minister Jacques Chirac to tip the voting polls in his favour during the second round of the French presidential elections (Fraser, 1988, 53). On the other hand, New Caledonian politician and head of the RPCR party Jacques Lafleur supports the military action, arguing that “if there was no decisive assault, the hostages would have been killed” (2000, 129). He equally defends the actions of then Minister for Overseas Departments and Territories Bernard Pons, the hard-handed instigator on the ground of the operation (2000, 131). The views of Lafleur and Franceschi are at odds with not only the overwhelming majority of Pacific-based authors, but also with the majority of the French press, including centrist newspaper *Le Monde*²³.

Although relevant literature from the Pacific region is less prevalent after the Matignon Accords of 1988, Francophone authors both from New Caledonia and from France have continued to write on political events in the dependency, including most importantly the Noumea Accord of 1998 and its implication for the future of the New Caledonian people²⁴. As could be expected, the range of stance and opinion taken on the Noumea Accord is also wide, reflecting the views of the Independentists and Loyalists in New Caledonia, the Conservatives and Socialists in metropolitan France, as well as Pacific-based commentators. The majority of worthwhile analyses are in support of the Accord²⁵. Lafleur, the instigator of the agreement, posits that it was a way to avoid the quickly impending referendum on self-determination in 1988 that the Loyalists “were certain to win, and that everyone knew in New Caledonia and in France,” and which had the potential to re-energise the Kanak Independentist minority to rally “around a racism that would harden with time” (2000, 182). Lafleur therefore supports the Noumea Accord as being the only viable way to avoid the “make or break” referendum set for 1988 (2000, 222).

²³ See Edwi Plenel and Alain Rollat, *Mourir à Ouvéa: Le Tournant Calédonien*. La Découverte/Le Monde, 1988.

²⁴ For general reading on the Noumea Accord read Alain Christnacht, *La Nouvelle Calédonie*, La documentation Française 2004; Paul De Deckker, ‘New Caledonia: yesterday, today and tomorrow’, Paper presented at the Otago Foreign Policy School, Dunedin 2004; Jacques Lafleur 2000; Anne Pitoiset 1999.

²⁵ See for example Alain Christnacht 2004 ; Anne Pitoiset 1999.

Other authors, typically those from the extreme right, oppose the Noumea Accord. Describing it as “nothing more than a clever politico-judicial montage or *machination* insidiously leaving no other outcome than eventual independence in New Caledonia” (1998, 398), Franceschi categorically rejects and condemns every provision of the Noumea Accord and expresses his contempt for everyone involved in its conception. Concluding, Franceschi posits that “in this new victory of ideology over law, the stakes are too serious to mince words. A spade must be called a spade. The perverse philosophy of the Noumea Accords can be summed up in three words: trickery, deceit, downfall of the state” (1998, 400). He even states that the New Caledonian affair bears witness to the “serious existential crisis” sweeping France, a country “wavering between nihilism, anarchism and the temptation for extremism” (1998, 404).

There is also a substantial body of literature from French jurists and legal academics analysing the unique and unprecedented place occupied by the Noumea Accords under French administrative and constitutional law²⁶. Issues of discussion and points of discord in these works are generally centred on the creation of a New Caledonian citizenship (as distinct from French citizenship), the legality of restricting the electoral body for the impending referendum on self-determination, the question of whether the Noumea Accord encourages the segregation of Kanak and European communities, and the merits of a ‘shared sovereignty’ arrangement between New Caledonia and the French State. Some authors believe these aspects of the Noumea Accord are in violation of the French Constitution. For example, Olivier Gohin states that “restricting the electoral body to the point of over-ruling universal suffrage in New Caledonia...poses a fundamental problem with regard to the will of the Republic” (Gohin, cited in Faberon and Agniel, 2000, 73). Jean-Pierre Doumenge posits that “the recognition of a Kanak specificity and juridical measures that accompany it sanction a societal duality which carries the seed...of risks of segregation at the heart of the social body in New Caledonia” (Doumenge, cited in Faberon and Agniel, 2000, 50). However, others like Alain Christnacht counter that the Noumea Accord “...was

²⁶ See for example Jean-Yves Faberon & Guy Agniel (Eds.), *La Souveraineté Partagée en Nouvelle-Calédonie et en Droit Comparé*, La Documentation Française 2000; Jean-Yves Faberon, ‘La France et son Outre-Mer : un Même Droit ou un Droit Différent ?’ In *Pouvoirs : L’Outre-Mer*, 5-21, Pao Editions du Seuil 2005; François Luchaire, *Le Statut Constitutionnel de la Nouvelle-Calédonie*, Economica 2000.

not from the outset created out of a desire to invent a new category [of statutory and legal framework]”, but was instead designed “to truly respond to the needs of New Caledonia...from its history, from the composition of its population, from all its accumulated experience” (Christnacht, cited in Faberon and Agniel, 2000, 64). A rift is thereby illustrated between those who view the Accord as legally unethical under the French Constitution, and those who view it as simply a means to the end of constructing a durable peace in the dependency.

Finally, there is a noticeable gap in the available literature however regarding France’s progress in implementing the provisions of the Noumea Accord, and whether or not the project of *rééquilibrage* or ‘rebalancing’ of the territory’s wealth and resources is having an effect on the attitudes of the divided New Caledonian population.

French Polynesia

A plethora of literature has been written on the subject of France’s relationship with French Polynesia, in most part due to France’s decision to base its nuclear testing programme (CEP) there in 1966²⁷. The ferocity of opposition to France’s nuclear testing programme – combined with the high international profile the issue received – explains why the pool of literature is so large.

Due to the controversial nature of the CEP it should not be surprising that the overwhelming majority of literature is critical of all aspects of France’s policy on this issue, from its decision to shift the testing programme from Algeria in 1963, to its reaction to the effect of the CEP on the economic, political and social structures within French Polynesia. Texts assume two general forms: those focussing specifically on the negative impact of the nuclear testing programme in the past and for the future²⁸, and those that use the example of the testing programme for the

²⁷ For general reading see Jean Chesneaux, *France in the Pacific: a Tentative Analysis*, Australian National University 1987; Pollock & Crocombe (Eds.), *French Polynesia: a Book of Selected Readings*, University of the South Pacific 1988; Stephen Henningham 1989; Robert Aldrich (Ed.) 1991; Maclellan and Chesneaux 1998; Stephen Henningham 1992.

²⁸ Peter De Vries and Han Seur, *Moruroa et Nous: expériences des Polynésiens au cours des 30 années d'essais nucléaires dans la Pacifique Sud*, Centre de Documentation et de Recherche sur la Paix et les Conflits 1997; Ben Finney, ‘French Polynesia: A Nuclear Dependency’ in Albert B. Robillard (Ed.), *Social Change in the Pacific Islands*, Kegan Paul International 1992; Gilles Blanchet, ‘What Development After the CEP? French Polynesia in search of a new style’ in Christian Jost (Ed.), *The*

greater goal of arguing for independence for the territory²⁹. In contrast there are very few published views supportive of French action in French Polynesia. Indeed, whereas the evolving situation in New Caledonia has produced a decline in oppositional views in the post Matignon-Noumea Accords environment, the level of anti-French writing on the subject of French Polynesia has remained relatively constant over time. This is perhaps due to the legacy left by the CEP of long-term development problems, social maladjustment and economic dependence. In terms of the views emanating from the wider South Pacific region, the ferocity of opposition is attributable not only to the general regional aversion to nuclear weapons, but also to the outrage over the bombing of the *Rainbow Warrior* in New Zealand waters in July 1985³⁰.

In the period following France's definitive cessation of the CEP in 1996, literature has typically focused on how to solve the myriad problems left by the programme and by French administrative rule, such as the severe dependence on France for financial assistance, and long-term development issues³¹. Authors point out however that the way forward continues to be contingent on the future nature of the relationship between French Polynesia and the French Republic. Sylvie Saque expresses confidence that the destiny of the territory will play out "in a manner that is autonomous and French simultaneously" (2002, 121), whilst other more left-leaning writers foresee independence as the only definitive remedy³².

In addition, much has been written on the life and influence of former French Polynesian President and political stalwart Gaston Flosse, and in particular the dubiously close relationship he has historically entertained with the Parisian political

French-Speaking Pacific: Population, Environment and Development Issues, Boombana, 1998; Jean Chesneaux 1987; Stephen Henningham 1989; Robert Aldrich (Ed.) 1991; Stephen Henningham, 'New Caledonia and French Polynesia - Towards Independence-in-Association?' in Robert Aldrich (Ed.) 1991; Chesneaux and Maclellan, *La France dans le Pacifique: de Bougainville à Mururoa*, La Découverte 1992.

²⁹ See Oscar Temaru, 'Maohinui (French Polynesia): the need for independence' in Pollock and Crocombe (Eds.) 1988; Jean Chesneaux (Ed.), *Tahiti après la Bombe : Quel Avenir pour la Polynésie?*, L'Harmattan 1995; Jean-Marc Regnault, *Le Pouvoir Confisqué en Polynésie Française : l'Affrontement Temaru-Flosse*, Les Indes Savantes 2005.

³⁰ The Greenpeace flagship the *Rainbow Warrior* was sunk by French DGSE agents in Auckland harbour in order to prevent it from travelling to French Polynesia to protest the CEP.

³¹ See Gilles Blanchet, 'What development after the CEP? French Polynesia in search of a new style' in Jost (Ed.) 1998; Maclellan and Chesneaux 1998; De Vries and Seur 1997.

³² See for example Regnault 2005.

elite³³. Authors agree that Flosse has had an impressive career as a prominent French Polynesian politician for more than two decades. Authors also agree however that his career, both as a local politician and as the French Secretary of State for the South Pacific, has been peppered with legally and ethically dubious conduct, and that he may be partly responsible for negative perceptions of France in the South Pacific³⁴.

However, Flosse's domination of French Polynesian politics appears to be at an end. The years 2005 and 2006 have witnessed unprecedented changes to the French Polynesian political landscape, with the Union for Democracy (UPLD) coalition unexpectedly upsetting Flosse's *Tahoera'a* in the 2004 territorial elections, forming a short-lived government headed by long-time Independentist politician Oscar Temaru. The UPLD's accession to power was turbulent: Flosse successfully filed a motion of censure three months into the government's first term, sparking mass protests and a government sit-in. This power struggle was extremely nuanced and complex, evoking a degree of suspicion over the impartiality of the French State in the ordeal³⁵.

While Regnault's work provides ample description of the *Tahoera'a*/UPLD power struggle and the French State's involvement in the dispute, the situation in the territory continues to evolve rapidly. Frequent changes in political affiliation and party-swapping are a common feature of the French Polynesian political system. An even more recent analysis of the events in French Polynesia will reveal the nature of the relationship between the French state and local Independentists, and address the question of whether France is acting impartially in Loyalist/Independentist disputes.

Key Findings

In sum, the literature available reveals the extent to which an up-to-date, focussed and balanced analysis of the French presence in the South Pacific is now necessary. Firstly, most works are historical in nature and do not specifically address the causal relationship between the French presence and regional stability. Secondly, the

³³ For useful analyses of Flosse see Regnault 2005; Chesneaux and Maclellan 1992; Stephen Bates, *The South Pacific Island Countries and France: A Study of Inter-State Relations*, Australian National University 1990.

³⁴ For the most comprehensive and up-to-date analysis of Flosse's conduct see Regnault 2005.

³⁵ For accounts of the recent political changes in French Polynesia and the role of the French State, see Regnault 2005; Sémir Al Wardi and Jean-Marc Regnault, 'La Crise Politique en Polynésie Française (2004-2005)' in *Regards sur l'Actualité*, no. 310, 2005.

majority of works are for the most part out-dated. This explains why there are very few English-language works that examine New Caledonia's crucially important Noumea Accord, concluded two years after the cessation of nuclear testing. It also reveals the necessity to re-apply geostrategic theories of France's regional engagement in the context of new global circumstances. Thirdly, there is a telling divide in the more pointed literature between those who express a Pacific-Anglo-centric and a Franco-centric view. Admittedly there is some balance in works co-produced by authors of Pacific and French origin. In most cases however, the position of a particular text with regard to the French presence in the region can be deduced by merely speculating on the origin of the author's name: it is not surprising therefore that the views of *Ounei-Small* are diametrically opposed to those of *Franceschi*.

This summary outline of related literature thus paves the way for a more recent, objective and pointed investigation into the contribution that France currently makes toward stability in the South Pacific. The investigation should therefore not only offer a degree of original information and analysis, but should seek to transcend the cultural knowledge divide, by employing a balance of relevant French and English language material. Historical texts can be utilised insofar as they offer useful analysis, and the views of French officials will be sought to lend legitimacy to any conclusions that may emerge. Finally, the resulting investigation is expected to contain many original aspects, as it will likely demonstrate an investigative reach, balance and level of analysis never before achieved with regard to France's recent role in the South Pacific region.

Chapter 3: Theoretical Considerations: Identifying Key Variables

This thesis seeks to explain the French approach to decolonisation and its impact on conflict and stability in the South Pacific. France's relationship with its South Pacific dependencies appears to be anachronistic with global interpretations of the decolonisation movement. Peter Wallenstein describes this movement as "located in the Middle East, South and South-east Asia in the 1940s and 1950s, in North Africa in the 1950s, in sub-Saharan Africa in the 1960s and 1970s, [and] in Pacific and Caribbean waters in the 1970s and 1980s," and states that "the decolonisation era was seen as finished after the Southern continents had been liberated from colonial domination³⁶" (2002, 164). However, France's current relationship *vis-à-vis* its South Pacific dependencies would appear to be of a colonial nature: the existence of pro-independence groups – and the emergence of anti-independence groups as a reaction to this – has resulted in conflicts necessitating French intervention. What is most striking in France's approach to such conflict is its strong reluctance to consider resolution methods that would surrender a degree of sovereign control.

In light of this, what are the key variables that explain France's desire to retain sovereignty of its South Pacific dependencies, and how does this impact on stability in the region? It will be argued that the factors traditionally offered to explain the withdrawal of colonial powers from their former colonies – such as economic and strategic considerations – cannot entirely explain France's relationship with New Caledonia and French Polynesia. As such, it will be demonstrated that an 'emotional interests' variable is particularly helpful in explaining the French approach toward decolonisation in the South Pacific.

Definition of Concepts

Decolonisation-based conflict

The definition of 'decolonisation' is disputed, exemplified in the fact that New Caledonia is currently on the United Nations Special Committee's list of Non-Self

³⁶ Wallenstein concedes however that "[t]his verdict, of course, depends on the definition of 'colonialism.'"

Governing territories to be decolonised³⁷, whereas France considers the ‘decolonisation’ of its dependencies to be possible without the transfer of sovereign powers. Springhall concedes in this way that “[t]he historical process that this overarching term draws our attention to has not yet acquired an agreed definition among historians, but ‘decolonisation’ usually means the taking of measures by indigenous people and/or their white overlords intended eventually to end external control over *overseas* colonial territories and the attempt to replace formal political rule by some new kind of relationship (2001, 3).

‘Conflict’ is defined by Wallensteen as “a social situation in which a minimum of two actors (*parties*) strive to acquire at the same moment in time an available set of scarce resources,” on the basis that conflict consists of the three central components of “action,” “incompatibility” and “actors” (2002, 16). A broad interpretation will be taken with regard to the “action” or conflict observed, so that instances of serious yet non-violent political and civil unrest can also be included in this analysis. In this way, periods of protracted political instability (such as power-jostling between local³⁸ Independentist and Loyalist leaders) or tensions in civil society (such as strategic union strikes) linked to the decolonisation/independence issue will be included, in order to examine the way France approaches these situations. The central ‘incompatibility’ will be the disagreement between actors over continued French rule in the South Pacific dependencies, including disagreement over particular policies pertaining to French sovereignty (such as nuclear testing). Conflict situations arising from other issues (such as local labour disputes) will not be included if no link can be established between the incompatibility and the overbearing issue of the French presence³⁹. Finally, the actors involved in French Pacific conflict will be understood to comprise:

³⁷ See ‘The United Nations and Decolonization: Non-Self Governing Territories Listed by Committee in 2002’, <http://www.un.org/Depts/dpi/decolonization/trust3.htm> accessed 13 February 2006.

³⁸ ‘Local’ hereon in will refer to events or actors that occur in France’s South Pacific dependencies, as opposed to the French mainland.

³⁹ Ultimately however, local conflict situations are often inextricably linked in one way or another with disagreement over continued French control, leaving a particularly broad interpretation of “action” and “incompatibility”.

1. Those seeking independence from France (the Independentists), or those demonstrating a rejection of the French presence in relation to an aspect of French policy;
2. Those favouring continued ties with France (the Loyalists);
3. The French State, represented through the policies of its successive metropolitan governments, and principally embodied in the territory through the *Haut Commissaire* or 'High Commissioner', the judicial system, and forces of order.

Therefore, the definition of 'decolonisation-based conflict' shall be as follows: **broadly-defined situations of serious tension and/or violence arising between Independentists, Loyalists and/or the French State over at least one issue pertaining to continued French sovereignty in the South Pacific dependencies.**

Key Variables

Rosenau's *The Scientific Study of Foreign Policy* (1971) identifies the key variables that determine a country's foreign policy. This study draws on Rosenau's work 'pre-theory of foreign policy making' to identify three key variables in a country's approach to decolonisation: (1) strategic interests; (2) economic interests; and (3) 'emotional' interests. An initial obstacle is posed by Rosenau's theoretical framework in that it accounts for *foreign policy* decision-making. As New Caledonia and French Polynesia are not sovereign states, France would assert that its approach to conflict in these dependencies is rather a matter of *domestic* policy. Nonetheless, the situation of France with regard to its dependencies bears many similarities to foreign policy decisions: France is separated from its dependencies by a considerable distance; it must react to decisions made by territorial governments acting (to a certain extent) independently of itself; and it must seek to protect and advance its own interests against the differing interests of peoples who are similar – though not identical – to its own. Thus while Rosenau's pre-theory of foreign policy making does not correspond perfectly with the situation presented by France and its dependencies, it does offer decision-making variables that can be manipulated for this analysis.

Strategic Interests

The first variable to be tested is ‘strategic interests,’ referring to the set of factors posed by the global external environment that influence the colonial power’s desire to retain sovereignty of its territories. This is a derivative of Rosenau’s ‘systemic’ variable, defined as “any nonhuman aspects of a society’s external environment or any actions occurring abroad that condition or otherwise influence the choices made by its officials” (1971, 109). For the purposes of this thesis, where the desire to retain sovereignty is the principal issue at stake, ‘strategic interests’ will be taken to represent those policies implemented by the colonial power in order to maintain or advance the benefits obtained from its territories in relation to nonhuman forces at play within the wider global system. France’s strategic interests in the South Pacific dependencies will therefore concern defence policy, both in order to maintain territorial control (such as through strategic denial during the Cold War era) and to pursue national strategic objectives (such as the nuclear testing programme in French Polynesia). Strategic interests will also be interpreted to entail those aspects of French policy that affirm control over any other ‘strategic’ non-human resources obtained from its dependencies, such as the control of New Caledonia’s nickel deposits.

Economic Interests

The second variable is ‘economic interests’, defined as those aspects of a colonial power’s policy aimed at exploiting the human and non-human resources available in its territories for economic advantage. This will include such aspects as control over Exclusive Economic Zones (EEZs), notably for fishing purposes, and control over all other profitable resources not otherwise described as ‘strategic’. The economic interests variable has been loosely derived from the work of Rosenau concerning levels of development, whereby a large country with a developed economy is likely to prioritise obtaining ‘nonhuman resources’ by prescribing standardising ‘roles’ for officials that ingrain the pursuit of economic advantage (1971, 142). However, in the more focused context of colonial powers wishing to retain sovereignty over their territories, the economic interests variable is posited to be more influential in the decision-making process than would normally be the case in Rosenau’s foreign policy theory.

France's economic interests in relation to its South Pacific dependencies will therefore be examined with a cost-benefit analysis: how many resources (financial, bureaucratic, military) must France allocate in order to uphold sovereignty over its dependencies, compared with how many resources it receives in recompense for this sovereignty. For the purposes of this thesis, merely exercising control over territorial lands will not be considered an economic interest, as this control does not in itself guarantee the procurement of economic advantage.

Emotional Interests

The last variable to be tested shall be called 'emotional interests'. This refers to those factors informing a colonial power's approach toward its territories that are independent from 'rational' and realist decision-making factors, such as strategic or economic interests. Indeed, emotional interests can be described as *irrational*, in the sense that they may continue to factor into a decision-making process or remain constant with regard to a particular issue in spite of contradictory concerns grounded on more concrete and rational evidence. In this sense, emotional interests are not formed through isolated cost-benefit analyses, but are moreover the product of the way the actor perceives itself, the socially and culturally learned values the actor espouses, and the historical events that have fashioned the way the actor views the world. The implication of the emotional interests variable is that it may continue to motivate an actor to behave in a certain way in spite of irrefutable evidence that it should be behaving otherwise.

'Emotional interests' is a complex variable. Rosenau's 'societal' variable in foreign policy decision-making has been appropriated in order to partially explain what constitutes 'emotional' factors in a colonial power's approach towards its territories. Defined as "those nongovernmental aspects of a society which influence its external behaviour," Rosenau lists the major value orientations of a society, its degree of national unity, and the extent of its industrialisation as factors that could contribute to the formation of a country's foreign policy (1971, 109). Certainly, major value orientations and the extent of national unity are factors that are independent from strategic and economic considerations but could nonetheless weigh heavily on the issue of decolonisation.

Another factor to be included in the emotional interests variable is the role of key individuals motivated by their personally held beliefs. “Individual variables,” Rosenau states, “include all those aspects of a decision-maker – his (*sic*) values, talents, and prior experiences – that distinguish his foreign policy choices or behaviour from those of every other decision-maker” (1971, 108). This interpretation can be reworked for the purposes of this thesis in order to acknowledge the importance of the ‘emotional’ nature of decisions made by key individuals with regard to the issue of decolonisation. For example, successive French Presidents have differed over the level of importance they have ascribed to retaining sovereignty over the French dependencies. Whereas François Mitterrand was not opposed to the possibility of an independent New Caledonia, Jacques Chirac has historically shown himself determined to prevent losing overseas territory. Pro-independence leader Oscar Temaru in French Polynesia appears unmoveable in his personal quest to obtain independence for his homeland. At all times the decisions made by key individuals on the issue of decolonisation have been emotionally charged. The emotional interests variable will thus incorporate the potential for decision makers to be motivated by their own emotional position on France’s retention of its dependencies.

Methodology

The relative importance of these three variables will be ascertained through two case studies, that examine the impact of France on conflict and stability in New Caledonia and French Polynesia. What aspects of French policy are to be assessed in this analysis? Due to the highly integrated nature of France’s dependencies within the wider Republic, there are potentially infinite ways in which France’s domestic policy could have some degree of impact on stability in its South Pacific domain. This analysis will therefore only concern itself with those aspects of French policy aimed at having a **direct and intentional impact** on the political, administrative, military, economic, and social structures that exist in France’s South Pacific dependencies. This will therefore include policies:

- determining the way France’s overseas departments and territories are to be administered in general;
- determining the powers to be devolved to territorial governments;

- governing immigration between metropolitan France and the dependencies;
- allocating French funding and subsidies for territorial economies;
- pertaining to French military interests in the dependencies;
- specifically aimed at issues localised in France's South Pacific dependencies, such as particular development issues or social imbalances.

In this way, all aspects of France's domestic policy which may have exerted an influence on the stability of its South Pacific dependencies in an indirect or unintentional way will be omitted from this analysis⁴⁰. France will thus be gauged on how it responds to decolonisation-based conflict situations, and whether its policy approach is ultimately of benefit or of detriment to the stability of its South Pacific dependencies.

Hierarchy of Key Variables

The "relative potency" (Rosenau, 1971) of the above key variables will therefore be ascertained, in order to establish a hierarchy of factors underpinning a colonial power's reluctance to cede sovereignty to its dependencies. For example, is it economic, strategic or emotional interests that best explain the colonial power's approach? The construction of a hierarchy will facilitate conclusions on what best explains colonial powers' continued sovereign control over their territories in the post-colonial era.

Theoretical Limitations

This study is limited because it does not seek to provide an exhaustive hierarchy of all possible variables that could compel a colonial power to retain control over its territories. The economic and strategic variables were isolated because they have factored in other works dealing with decolonisation⁴¹, but this study does not draw authoritatively from decolonisation-related theories of state behaviour to establish

⁴⁰ For example, the way the French government forces dealt with rioters in Paris in 2005 may have impacted on French Polynesia's stability by heightening anti-police sentiment among Tahitian youths. This will not be included in this analysis, however, as it can be regarded as an unanticipated effect from a policy not primarily concerned with France's overseas dependencies.

⁴¹ See John Springhall, *Decolonization since 1945*, Palgrave 2001; Bates 1990; Cordonnier 1995.

what other authors have posited to be the principal factors in this process. Rather, it is a study of merely three variables that are expected to exert influence in colonial-type situations.

Chapter 4: the Impact of France on Conflict and Stability in New Caledonia

New Caledonia is an example of how France, through its policy outlook and its evolving approach toward its dependencies, has been both detrimental and beneficial to stability over the course of its presence in the South Pacific. While France's approach to dealing with conflict in New Caledonia has historically been problematic, a substantial improvement can be observed over the period of 1985 to 2006. This has been achieved through a more cohesive and co-ordinated policy approach, a more inclusive decision-making process that incorporates local concerns, and the courage to set French constitutional precedents towards achieving a durable peace. However, this goal has not yet been assured: in 2019 New Caledonian citizens are scheduled to vote in a referendum on whether to remain within the French Republic or to become an independent state, and the inherently high stakes involved will intensify the atmosphere on the ground as it draws near. In the interim, France faces the residual problems of inter-ethnic hostility, and the uneven economic and social landscape that has precipitated such tensions.

Nonetheless, the crucial Matignon and Noumea peace agreements appear to have heralded an end to the divisive and destabilising policy approaches of France's colonial past. It will be illustrated that the odious Ouvéa hostage-taking of 1988 may have permanently galvanised all parties concerned – be they French or New Caledonian, Independentist or Loyalist – against further acts of violence in the dependency, and that 1988 therefore represents the year when France's negative impact on stability reached its apex.

Looking toward the future, it is useful to map out possible results of the referendum set for 2019, and comment on the likely implications of these scenarios for the stability and prosperity of New Caledonia. The vote to remain within the French Republic would cement France's commitment to ensuring the economic and social development of the dependency, with the potential destabilising factor that the Independentists – denied once more of their primary goal – may again turn away from

the negotiating table in favour of confrontational methods. On the other hand, a vote for independence would appease the Independentists and allow for a better insertion of the newly formed state into its regional environment, but would undoubtedly result in a substantial reduction of French financial assistance and support.

It will be concluded that the recent French approach to New Caledonia is a far cry from that of the 1980s, and that as a consequence the dependency is benefiting from the impetus France now places on a locally legitimate and negotiated decision-making process. However, the merit of France's future contribution to stability in New Caledonia will ultimately depend on its success in redressing social and economic imbalances, as well as remaining selflessly impartial in Independentist/Loyalist related disputes.

Key Points on the Historical Role of France in New Caledonian Conflict

Three key points can be offered to outline the general nature of conflict that has existed in New Caledonia:

1. Violent conflict in the dependency has for the most part emerged due to tensions over one crucial issue: whether to keep New Caledonia within the French Republic – the desire of the Loyalists, or whether to see it gain independence – the desire of the Independentists. Though it is true that a varying degree of inter-ethnic hostility has existed in New Caledonia since France took possession in 1853⁴², it is not this hostility alone that is the driving factor behind the conflict observed in the dependency. Instead, it is the bipolar opposition between Loyalists and Independentists that has precipitated instances of conflict.
2. While the nature of conflict is essentially *bipolar*, insofar as it concerns the clash of two positions on the issue of independence, there are more than two group-actors involved. The first group-actor is the Independentists, typically (but not exclusively) composed of indigenous Kanaks in New Caledonia, and represented

⁴² For accounts of New Caledonia during the early contact phase see Stephen Henningham, *France and the South Pacific: a Contemporary Analysis*, Allen & Unwin 1992.

through Independentist political parties⁴³. The second group-actor is the Loyalists or anti-Independentists, comprised typically (but again not exclusively) of European settlers known as *Caldoches*, as well as the many metropolitan French citizens and other immigrants residing in the dependency, and represented through Loyalist political parties⁴⁴. The third actor in the conflict – and indeed the actor who is arguably most responsible for the way in which the other two group-actors engage each other – is the French State. In New Caledonia, the French State is represented through the policies of its successive metropolitan governments, the *Haut Commissaire* or ‘High Commissioner’, the judicial system and security forces.

3. The actions of France’s successive governments *vis-à-vis* the independence issue have had a large and direct impact on instances of conflict in the dependency. This is because France’s sovereign control of New Caledonia makes it solely responsible for its security situation. France can thus be an actor in a given conflict through the mobilisation of French security forces in response to threats posed by Independentists, Loyalists or both. It is also because French governments have historically approached the independence issue in very different – if not contradictory – ways. In some instances France has either fermented conflict through its policy approach, or has itself been an actor in a conflict through the assertion of its national prerogatives. In other situations, France has acted to quell tensions and resolve conflicts between Independentists

⁴³ At the time of writing the largest Independentist party in New Caledonia is the FLNKS: *Front de Libération Nationale Kanak et Socialiste*, ‘National Kanak Socialist Liberation Front’, created in September 1984 with the dissolution of the *Front Indépendantiste* (see Henningham 1992 and Christnacht 2004 for background). The FLNKS is an umbrella group to a configuration of smaller pro-independence parties, currently including UNI (National Independence Union), PALIKA (Kanak Liberation Party), a breakaway faction from the UC (Caledonian Union), FULK (United Front for Kanak Liberation), UPM (Progressive Melanesian Union), and PSC (Caledonian Socialist Party). The FLNKS has at times included other parties, and has recently been dogged by internal divisions: at the 2004 territorial elections it was thus divided under different lists (Europa 2006, p1830). Because of such differences in approach, since December 2001 the FLNKS has been directed by a collegial political bureau and has had no president. See ‘New Caledonia’ in Europa World Year Book 2006 for more details.

⁴⁴ The largest Independentist parties in New Caledonia at the time of writing are the *Avenir Ensemble* (‘United Future’) and the *Rassemblement-UMP* (a sister-party to the prominent centre-right *UMP* party in mainland France – ‘Union pour un Mouvement Populaire’). *Rassemblement-UMP* was known prior to 2002 as the RPCR, *Rassemblement pour la Calédonie dans la République* (Rally for Caledonia in the Republic). See Henningham 1992 and Christnacht 2004 for background, as well as ‘New Caledonia’ in Europa World Year Book 2006 for more details.

and Loyalists. The action of France is therefore the key variable in the analysis of stability in New Caledonia.

The French Impact from 1985 to 2006

The three aforementioned points on past conflict in New Caledonia serve as a useful base-point from where to begin an analysis of France's impact on conflict and stability from 1985 to 2006. In 1985 New Caledonia was already fraught with instances of political violence between Independentists and Loyalists, and had already necessitated a considerable level of involvement from the French State.

Pisani's Independence-in-Association Plan

If the work of Edgard Pisani from 1985 is the first means by which France's contribution to stability in New Caledonia is to be gauged, then it would not be inaccurate to suggest that it did not start promisingly. On January 7 1985 government delegate and newly appointed High Commissioner to New Caledonia Edgard Pisani proposed that the dependency's transition to a status of independence-in-association would satisfy both the Independentist and Loyalist causes, and bring about an end to the dependency's violent conflict, as well as satisfy France's strategic interests (Connell, 1988, 6). The plan was intended to appease all sides by offering sovereignty to the Kanaks, firm economic and political guarantees to the Europeans, and a guarantee that France would retain influence. Contradicting the history of administrative rule from Paris, Pisani indicated that "French authority would be exercised by negotiation rather than imposed", and that an unprecedented recognition of Kanak sovereignty would be provided (Methven, 1987, 23). New Caledonians would choose whether or not to implement the plan in a referendum to be held in July 1985 (Fraser, 1988).

Four days after Pisani's proposal however, any chance of it being realised seemed dashed. The teenage son of a European farmer, Yves Tual, was killed during an exchange of gunfire between Kanaks and settlers on an isolated farm on the central west coast. In protest, members of the extreme right organised demonstrations in Noumea that soon escalated into riots: tear gas and stun grenades were used by French police forces to control the crowd; establishments belonging to pro-independence

non-Kanaks were burnt down, and extensive damage was done to the town (Fraser, 1988, 30). At about the same time, *gendarme* marksmen gunned down two Kanak militants at a farmhouse near La Foa, one of whom was Éloi Machoro, prominent FLNKS member and Minister for Security in the recently-announced “Provisional Government of Kanaky” (Henningham, 1991, 193). The rioting in Noumea lasted two days, ending upon Pisani’s establishment of a state of emergency and the imposition of a curfew. Christnacht believes the death of Machoro can be interpreted as a sort of “compensation” for the death of Yves Tual to appease the European-generated riots that were threatening Noumea (2004, 43).

The independence-in-association plan was eventually rejected by both the RPCR and FLNKS: it offered the prospect of too much independence for the former, and not enough for the latter⁴⁵. Two further outbreaks of violence occurred under the watch of Pisani: the extreme right Caledonian Front ‘picnic’ in the FLNKS stronghold town of Thio on February 17, resulting in thirteen injured Kanaks through clashes with riot police; and further riots in Noumea on May 8, resulting in the death of one Kanak youth, and leaving over one hundred people injured. It had thus become apparent that Pisani had no experience at commanding public order (Fraser, 1988). The dismal progression of events prompted French President François Mitterrand to make a brief visit to the dependency to show his support for Pisani, though the Pisani Plan would no longer continue as originally envisaged (Fraser, 1988). Pisani was subsequently recalled to Paris and nominated as Minister for New Caledonia.

While most authors agree that the Pisani Plan was a worthwhile attempt at resolving New Caledonia’s problems, it had several shortcomings. It brought neither a lasting peace to the dependency nor encouraged consensus on its future (Henningham, 1991, 192). Indeed, Cordonnier suggests that it the Plan caused more political problems than it resolved (1995). Anne Pitoiset states that from the outset RPCR leaders had resisted

⁴⁵ The Independentists felt that it was an unsatisfactory version of their demand for outright independence. They were also angered by the French State’s refusal to grant their request to revise the franchise of the referendum, in order to exclude those short-time immigrants from France and other French Pacific territories who historically acted to counter-balance the indigenous Kanak vote. On the other hand, the Loyalists, egged on by metropolitan conservatives, saw the Plan as a proposal for independence masked by illusory guarantees (Christnacht 2004).

co-operation with Pisani on the basis that he was unable to restore public order in the dependency, a position that emerged as the principal means of attack against the Socialist Government by the Right (1999).

Secondly, the Plan emerged at a time when the dependency was fraught with tension, the violence of 1984 still resonant in the minds of New Caledonians:

Having been caught off guard by the Kanak boycott, it appeared that the French Government was too eager to come up with a solution to an issue over which it was coming under daily attack in Paris. A settling-down period between the turmoil and the solution was needed, in which the anti-independence population could be acclimatised to such a strong proposal as that of Pisani. In January 1985 New Caledonians were still living in a culture of violence (Fraser, 1988, 30).

Indeed, offering such a Leftist peace proposal so soon after a period of protracted violence would seem perilous.

Thirdly, Henningham illustrates that even if political circumstances had been more favourable, the timetable outlined by Pisani was unrealistic. Setting the referendum for July 1985 meant that Pisani had to shore up a majority of consent from a 'lukewarm' independence movement and an almost entirely opposed Loyalist population in all but a few months, against the background of intense animosity between these two communities (Henningham, 1991, 19). Under such an ambitious timetable, the likelihood of obtaining a majority of support for the Plan was slim.

Chirac Takes Over

The Pisani Plan was replaced by the 'Fabius Plan', named after the Socialist Prime Minister Laurent Fabius. Even though the Plan was criticised by both main parties in New Caledonia, it nonetheless facilitated a "convalescence period" (Fraser, 1988, 26) and a relative return to calm. The essential aspect of the Fabius Plan was that it retained Pisani provision for a referendum on self-determination, only now it would be held before the end of 1987. However, the Fabius Plan was short-lived: the French legislative elections of March 1986 saw the Conservatives return to power in Paris, with a coalition headed by neo-Gaullist Conservative Jacques Chirac. The Socialist President François Mitterrand was thus confronted with a politically opposed Prime Minister, Jacques Chirac, in France's first period of 'cohabitation' government

(Cordonnier, 1995, 149). Working in conjunction with the new Overseas Territories Minister Bernard Pons, Chirac would effectively work to undo any advances in autonomy made under the Socialists and would usher in a regime responsible for more violent conflict in New Caledonia than any other in the dependency's history.

The Pons Era

According to Christnacht, the aims of the policies conceived by Chirac and Pons for New Caledonia were to “support economic development, re-establish order, reconfigure the public institutions for the good of the dependency, and prepare a referendum on the future of New Caledonia” (2004, 44). Chesneaux and Maclellan however describe the policies as “aggressively anti-Melanesian”, including “financial asphyxiation of the regions governed by the Kanaks, a massive envoy of troops...militarily encircling the tribes, measures (notably land-based) directly favouring the RPCR, and muscled repression of Kanak non-violent protests” (1992, 162). Pons set up a new body to deal with land disputes, stripped the regions created by the Fabius Statute of their powers and handed these powers back to the French High Commissioner, and organised a referendum for self-determination to be held in September 1987⁴⁶ (Fraser, 1988).

What ensued therefore was a reversal of those limited progresses made under the Socialists and former administrations in favour of a situation that once again placed the destiny of New Caledonia under the control of the French Government. The regional councils established by the Fabius Statute remained in place, though the regions became mere administrative shadows of their former selves as the important advances in autonomy created under previous administrations were stripped away. The crucial powers of the new regions – such as fiscal authority, economic policy, powers of land reform, and direct development links with Paris – were either

⁴⁶ It is not surprising that the Chirac-Pons administration ushered in a more hard-line approach to the situation in New Caledonia. Chirac had previously announced his intention to keep New Caledonia within the French Republic. Similarly, newly re-elected French Polynesian President Gaston Flosse – a long-time advocate of the French presence in the region – became the Secretary of State for the South Pacific. This new power configuration represented an undeniable swing away from the pro-independence agenda of the Socialist government, with the likelihood that policies pursued in New Caledonia would henceforth be extremely conservative (Connell 1988; Bates 1990).

significantly reduced, or handed entirely over to the High Commissioner or to the Loyalist-controlled Congress (Clark, 1987). Pons cited an alleged lack of progress in these policy areas and decreed that the regions could retain only those powers which they had manifestly proved themselves capable of managing – even though they had only been allowed a mere six months to do so (Methven, 1987). This shift of authority removed any potential for FLNKS-controlled regional governments to develop viable regional economies, rendering them totally dependent on the Territorial Congress in which they were an ineffective minority (Connell, 1988). The Land Office was replaced by the Agency of Rural Development and Land Adjustment – ‘ADRAF’ – presided over by the High Commissioner. As Louis Mapou states, the new agency eclipsed the idea of a more harmonious redistribution of land between the Kanak and Caldoche communities and erased all the “psychological credit” achieved by the Kanaks under the former land reform policy (1999, 144). In 1987 two thirds of all land that was distributed by ADRAF was given to Europeans: an “extraordinary situation” given the existing pattern of land ownership, where 1500 settlers already held more land than 35,000 Kanaks (Connell, 1988, 10).

Nomadisation

Meanwhile, the Pons mandate of restoring the rule of law and order had instigated an unprecedented level of militarisation in the dependency, with the French military presence reaching over 8000 troops and riot police. In an attempt to “ensure or maintain the security of the [provincial] populations and to bring them humanitarian assistance” (Franceschi, 1998, 171), Pons developed a policy of military ‘nomadisation’. This entailed the organisation of military units “as light and mobile as possible”, purported by French military authorities to “create a climate of trust and security favourable to the pursued goal” (Franceschi, 1998, 171). These units worked amongst Kanak tribes in rural areas to provide agricultural, technical and infrastructural assistance, while simultaneously neutralising the FLNKS’ power and authority over these communities (Connell, 1988, 9).

Was the neutralisation of FLNKS control merely an unexpected bonus of this policy, or did it instead concern the military repression of a legitimate political entity under the guise of humanitarian assistance? Franceschi for example believes the units liberated the rural Kanaks from an intimidating FLNKS influence: “...the population

progressively demonstrates moving signs of attachment to France. They are firstly timid, due to possible reprisals from the FLNKS, then more and more open, once security and trust were found once more” (Franceschi, 1998, 175). According to Connell however, the policy of nomadisation created “a situation which augured badly for both peace and future Kanak independence” (1988, 9). In the final analysis it seems implausible that Pons’ nomadisation strategy was a benevolent attempt to provide humanitarian assistance in rural areas. It is far more likely that it was a thinly veiled attempt at intimidating, fragmenting and neutralising FLNKS activity in areas that had always been resolutely sympathetic to the Independentist cause. This is especially so when taking into account the heavily politicised nature of the dependency at the time. The nomadisation policy executed by France can therefore be regarded as a way of undermining the FLNKS support base in the crucial pre-referendum environment, when electoral solidarity was more important than ever before.

The Referendum

It will be argued that the aspect of France’s policy approach causing the most severe impact on peace and stability in New Caledonia was the insistence of the Chirac-Pons administration to push ahead with the referendum on self-determination, which was structured in a way that inherently favoured the Loyalist population. This was in spite of warnings from the wider Pacific region that the referendum would be biased and likely to incite further violent conflict⁴⁷.

At issue was the debate over who should be eligible to vote in the referendum. Aside from the Kanak and Caldoche populations, New Caledonia is also home to migrants from metropolitan France and from the other French Pacific territories⁴⁸. Faced with the question of independence for New Caledonia, these groups typically align

⁴⁷ The eighteenth South Pacific Forum meeting at Apia condemned the referendum, describing it as ‘divisive, futile, and a recipe for disaster’ (Forum Communiqué: Eighteenth South Pacific Forum).

⁴⁸ New Caledonia is an attractive destination for French public servants and their families, who can earn almost two times their salary in the mainland by embarking on what it is regarded as a form of working holiday in the French Pacific. Generally speaking, the salary of a public servant in overseas France is affected by a “coefficient of majoration” of 1.73 for the region of Noumea and 1.94 for the rest of the dependency, coupled with a residence allowance, familial allocations, and diverse other advantages, from the *prime de risqué* or ‘risk bonus’, to the *prime d’éloignement* or ‘distance bonus’ granted to expatriates. In this way, the average monthly salary in the public service is 30% superior to that in the private sector and three times higher than the agricultural sector.” (Pitoiset 1999 p190).

themselves with the local Loyalist population and favour continuing ties with France, thereby bolstering the Loyalist voting bloc and counter-balancing Kanak attempts to establish an electoral majority. Because of this, the FLNKS requested that the electoral body for the impending referendum should be limited to people born in New Caledonia or having one parent born in New Caledonia: a restriction which would have excluded 24 per cent of the population of the dependency (Doumenge, 1998, 141). France rejected this request on the basis that it would be in violation of the principles of the French Constitution⁴⁹, and ruled instead that all persons who had been residing in the dependency for at least three years could vote (Christnacht, 2004, 45). This effectively excluded government officials temporarily posted to the dependency, but included most of the non-European immigrants now living there. The FLNKS subsequently rejected this definition of the electoral body on the grounds that it pre-determined the referendum outcome, and decided to boycott the referendum completely. A series of pre-referendum protests seeking to “destabilise the strategy of the colonial government” were met with hard repression by French riot police (Connell, 1988, 10).

Referendum Results

The referendum went ahead on September 13 1987, with a participation rate of only 59% of enlisted voters, and achieving the result of 98% of votes cast in favour of remaining in the French Republic. The boycott executed by the independence movement was thus partly successful: the voter turnout was low, casting a degree of doubt about the legitimacy of the poll. However, not all the Melanesian population – who made up around 45 per cent of the electorate – heeded the call for a boycott, and indeed some Melanesian voters also opted to remain with France. By contrast almost all Europeans and Polynesians voted against independence, the latter being eager to avoid the possible repercussions of being deemed independence supporters by abstaining (Connell, 1988). The outcome of the referendum was therefore considered a triumph by the French government, and as illegitimate by the FLNKS:

This consultation therefore resolves nothing. It also needs to be asked why the government decided to maintain this referendum on self-determination. Other than the fact that it had been planned by the preceding government, it seems that they had wanted to demonstrate that independence had been rejected, so that once the partisans of French sovereignty were reassured and the Independentists

⁴⁹ Under the French Constitution participation in the territories is generally open to all adults who have resided there for at least six months.

weakened, a negotiation would be led in which the non-Independentists would be in a position of strength (Christnacht, 2004, 45).

The original optimism of the French government that the poll would permanently solve the independence issue was short-lived (Fraser, 1988), as pro-independence sentiment proved to be no less resolute than before. Methven believes that by being “held without adequate consultation to explore the possibilities for compromise between local communities, the referendum represented the most inappropriate method for the development of New Caledonian society” (1987, 35).

The conservative shift in France’s approach to difficulties in New Caledonia thus made the dependency ripe for further conflict⁵⁰. The revoking of regional powers acquired under the Socialists, the hard repression of FLNKS protests by French forces, and the inherently partisan referendum outcome left the Kanak population disillusioned and frustrated. The Chirac-Pons administration left Independentists with the belief that any further efforts to return to the negotiating table would be futile: it appeared that all channels other than the re-invigoration of militant tactics and violence had been exhausted. Indeed, even Jean-Marie Tjibaou – the long-time advocate of passive opposition – seemingly changed his stance in favour of Kanak violence (Connell, 1988, 12), calling for a “muscle mobilisation” (Fraser, 1988, 26). It is thus in this context that the Ouvéa hostage-taking of April 1988 can be explained.

The Ouvéa Hostage-taking

In what was essentially a reaction to the political engineering of Pons, the Ouvéa tragedy involved the hostage-taking and killing of French gendarmes by Kanak militants, and the subsequent French military operation to rescue the hostages that resulted in the deaths of nineteen Kanaks and two French soldiers. The Ouvéa hostage-taking has come to embody the time at which problems associated with France’s engagement in New Caledonia and in the wider region reached a crescendo, providing the impetus for a turning point in the history of the French presence in the South Pacific (Cordonnier, 1995).

⁵⁰ In a further example of political bias, shortly after the referendum the Noumea authorities released without trial the seven European men held for the ‘Hienghène massacre’ of ten Kanak militants, to the ire and disbelief of the Kanak population (Fraser 1988). The French leftist newspaper *La Libération* described the ruling as “colonial justice” that granted “the right to lynching” (Pitoiset 1999).

The 'Pons Statute' – set in place January 22 1988 – provided for regional elections that would determine the makeup of the new regional councils, which were created by Pons in his changes to New Caledonian autonomy. Having already boycotted the referendum, the FLNKS was also committed to boycotting the regional elections in order to demonstrate a rejection of the Pons Statute (Connell, 1988, 13). However, in what was seen as a “cynical move” (Fraser, 1988, 49) to prevent any FLNKS-inspired violence marring his presidential campaign, Prime Minister Chirac set the New Caledonian regional elections for the same date as the first round of the French presidential elections: April 24 1988⁵¹. In anticipation of further violence more military troops and gendarmes were sent to the dependency, bringing the total to more than 9000. A ban on demonstrations was decreed in response to the plans of both the Independentist and Loyalist groups to demonstrate on the same day (Fraser, 1988, 52).

In spite of this strong military presence, a commando group of Kanak militants executed a dawn raid on a gendarmerie on Ouvéa Island on April 22, killing four gendarmes, pillaging the armoury, and taking twenty-seven hostages to a coral cave near the Gossanah tribe. The hostage-takers sought the withdrawal of the military from the island, the annulment of the Pons Statute and the regional elections, and the appointment of a mediator to organise a new referendum on self-determination (Fraser, 1988, 53). In the midst of this extremely tense political situation Minister Pons flew to Noumea, where he decided in consultation with Chirac that a French military operation would liberate the hostages. On May 5 – two days before the second and final round of French Presidential elections – a team of elite French military commandos and anti-terrorist specialists executed an eight-hour assault on the cave under the codename *Operation Victor*: the hostages were rescued, and nineteen Kanaks and two French soldiers were killed. In spite of FLNKS tactics to prevent the regional elections the RPCR had a landslide victory, obtaining 64% of all votes cast. While New Caledonians overwhelmingly favoured Chirac in the

⁵¹ According to Cordonnier, this would dampen any global media attention a FLNKS boycott may receive, and could possibly undermine the boycott outright by coaxing Kanaks into voting in the regional elections after firstly voting for a French President. In any case, all elections being risky in New Caledonia, Pons and his Cabinet preferred to group the risks into a one-day event (1995).

Presidential elections, it was instead François Mitterrand who prevailed over the Republic, gaining 54% of the vote against Chirac's 46%.

The planning, execution and aftermath of Operation Victor is entangled in controversy, with a number of politically and ethically dubious events casting grave suspicions about the way the Chirac-Pons administration handled the affair:

In the metropole, the results of the first round had not been very favourable to Jacques Chirac. The Prime Minister retained hope and decided to throw in the balance anything that would allow it to swing in his favour (...). He guessed it would be intolerable for a government that made a profession of firmness that gendarmes were being held prisoners in French territory (Legorjus, cited in Cordonnier, 1995, 174).

Fraser and Connell both point out that the operation was one of a series of dramatic 'hostage rescues' performed around this time, including the releasing of French hostages from Beirut and the repatriation of *Rainbow Warrior* bomber Dominique Prieur⁵². Performed just two days before the final round of voting, it thus appears that the raid was one of several calculated political expediencies on the part of Chirac, designed to appeal to the extreme right of the French electorate who would be receptive to strong stances taken on national security issues.

The second issue marring the role of the French state in Operation Victor was its execution on the ground, which was "as complex as much as it was controversial", and "demonstrates how little French action in the Pacific had evolved since the 1960s" (Cordonnier, 1995, 175). The already hypertrophied military presence in New Caledonia created clashes of legitimacy and authority between the various security forces involved: elite units from both the gendarmerie and the military were uneasily fused together in a highly irregular situation⁵³. The inherent opposition between the Socialist President Mitterrand and the Conservative Prime Minister Chirac in Paris created political tensions between these groups, with the two politicians being 'informed' by a different General or Captain on the ground. This tension translated to

⁵² For a detailed account of French involvement in the 'Rainbow Warrior Affair' or 'L'Affaire Greenpeace' read Dyson, John *Sink the Rainbow!: An Enquiry into the 'Greenpeace Affair'*, Reed Methuen 1986.

⁵³ The operation comprised the anti-terrorist and guerrilla warfare specialist unit the GIGN as well as the EPIGN from the National Gendarmerie, military troops from the Pacific Marine Regiment, as well as a crack military squad of assault specialists known as the "Onzième Choc".

high-end disagreement over whether the broader tactic of confrontation or of negotiation was to be employed. In addition, the substantial time delay involved in sending orders from Paris to New Caledonia – separated by a time zone difference of 11 hours – made co-ordination and co-operation extremely difficult (Cordonnier, 1995). These difficulties combined to produce a lethal cocktail of internal disagreement, psychological tension and aggressive military action.

Lastly, it became apparent that the methods employed in the hostage liberation were disproportionately severe and that they had not all conformed to standards of military conduct (Christnacht, 2004, 46). It emerged that three of the Kanak militants had been executed after surrender, along with a village youth who had brought food daily to the hostages. Acts of torture and degradation had been employed to discover the location of the hostages, and the leader of the hostage-takers, Alphonse Daniou, was shot in the knee during capture and left to die⁵⁴. The Minister of Defence later acknowledged that negligence and acts “contrary to military duty” had been committed (Pitoiset, 1999, 179).

The Impact of Ouvéa

The Ouvéa hostage-taking did not happen in a vacuum. It was instead the final act in a string of “brutally retrograde” policies instigated by Minister Pons with the consent of Chirac, which were “inspired by racist fanaticism and short-term electoral opportunism” (Chesneaux and Maclellan, 1992, 198). However, it likely provided the inspiration for fundamental improvements in both policy and ideology. The tragedy at Ouvéa had made apparent to all, both at home and abroad, that New Caledonia was on the brink of an ugly civil war. The gravity of the situation caused all parties concerned to take a step back from their previous positions and to instead reflect on how peace could be restored to the dependency. The presidential victory of François Mitterrand was “a sign for hope” for Kanaks and the French government to return to the negotiating table (Fraser, 1988, 54). The newly-appointed Socialist Prime Minister

⁵⁴ For accounts of French brutality during the Ouvéa Affair, see Edwy Plenel & Alain Rollat, *Mourir à Ouvéa: Le Tournant Calédonien*, La Découverte/Le Monde 1988; Susanna Ounei-Small, ‘Kanaky: The ‘Peace’ Signed with Our Blood’ in *Tu Galala: Social Change in the Pacific*, David Robie (Ed.), Bridget Williams & Pluto 1992.

Michel Rocard worked with both the FLNKS and the RPCR to forge an historic peace agreement that simultaneously restored security, changed France's relationship with the former colony, and provided the foundation for a gradual improvement in France's impact on stability in the South Pacific.

The Matignon Accords: June 26 1988

Eager to resolve a security dilemma that had become an issue of international embarrassment for the Republic, the newly formed government in Paris was quick to act on New Caledonia. Taking up his functions in May 1988, Prime Minister Rocard promptly sent a six-man mission to investigate the events at Ouvéa, and re-establish a dialogue between Independentists and Loyalists. While tensions remained and instances of conflict continued to occur sporadically⁵⁵, the mission conveyed its impartiality by meeting with all groups who cared to receive them in an atmosphere of respect and good-will⁵⁶, being refused consultation only by the extreme right parties the *Front National* and the *Front Calédonien*.

Rocard subsequently arranged for negotiations between FLNKS leader Jean-Marie Tjibaou and RPCR leader Jacques Lafleur in Paris, the first time that the two political foes had met officially since 1983 (Connell, 1988, 17). The three days of intense discussion between the two opposed political leaders – in collaboration with Rocard and, eventually, their respective parties – culminated in the signing on June 26 1988 of the Matignon Accord, and supplemented on August 20 by the signing of the Oudinot Accord⁵⁷. Together, the two agreements broadly referred to as the Matignon Accords have come to represent a “spectacular” (Chesneaux and Maclellan, 1992, 165) turning point in France's approach to New Caledonia, a diplomatic triumph for Michel Rocard, and a change in the impact of France on stability in the South Pacific. Jean-Jaques Queyranne comments that “[o]ver the ten years that followed the Matignon Accords, New Caledonia experienced institutional stability that was

⁵⁵ Fraser states for example that right wing bomb and arson attacks continued against pro-independence targets, roadblocks were still in place, and sniper fire was still evident in the Canala region (1988).

⁵⁶ The religious presence within this mission, comprising both a rector of Catholic instruction and the President of the French Protestant Federation, illustrated the new government's desire to not only resolve conflict in the dependency, but also to rebuild trust by including non-political and respected members of civil society in the dialogue process.

⁵⁷ The former is named after the Prime Minister's residence where the discussions took place, the Hôtel Matignon; the latter is named after rue Oudinot, the Parisian street on which the Overseas Ministry is located.

unprecedented in the recent history of the dependency” (Queyranne, 2000). Dominique Jouve describes the Accords as a form of *renaissance* in New Caledonian identity: “the Matignon Accords play in the Caledonian imaginary as a foundation, a zero point in history, or more exactly like a re-foundation...New Caledonia...can reconstruct itself on an entirely new base thanks to this act, quasi-religious, of re-foundation that are the Matignon Accords” (Jouve, cited in Pitoiset, 1999, 183)⁵⁸.

Tragedy struck, however, when the political father of the Independence movement was assassinated in a symbolic manifestation of the anger and bitterness that had been fermenting in New Caledonia since the 1980s. On May 5 1989 Jean-Marie Tjibaou and his deputy Yeiwéné-Yeiwéné travelled to Ouvéa to mark *la levée de deuil*, the end of a period of mourning for those who had died in the ‘events’ on the ill-fated island one year earlier. Djubelly Wéa, a former pastor of the Gossanah tribe who reproached the leaders of the FLNKS for betraying the Independentist cause and negotiating with the RPCR, shot and killed both men in an act of fanatical revenge. Wéa was shot and killed in turn by Tjibaou’s bodyguard. The New Caledonian people were shocked by Tjibaou’s death; the strong personal role he had played in cementing the Matignon Accords made many fear that his passing would signal a return to violence. However, out of loyalty and respect to the memory of Tjibaou, the Accords continued in a climate of calm. The resolve of the New Caledonian people to refuse further violence and honour Tjibaou’s legacy are a testament to the contribution he made as both mediator and peacemaker.

⁵⁸ There was however a considerable degree of initial opposition to the Accords. For the FLNKS, Tjibaou was perceived as having reneged on the long-fought goal of a swift and irreversible accession to independence, which was inexcusable to those who believed that the Ouvéa Affair had given their cause substantial political momentum and bargaining power. Leopold Jorédie commented that “having succeeded in convincing the slave to accept to shake hands with his master for the benefit of the French people is an exploit without parallel” (Fraser 1998). For the RPCR, the complicity of the new Socialist government in the Accords made them feel that France had abandoned them once and for all in favour of eventual independence. While 80 per cent of voters across the Republic were in favour of the Accords when they were submitted to a referendum on November 6, in New Caledonia itself the figures were much less encouraging and behaved clearly along ethnic lines. Though 57 per cent of the total population were in favour, 43 per cent – mainly from the settler-dominated South – were opposed. In fact, an overwhelming 63 per cent of voters from Noumea voted ‘no’ to the Accords (Christnacht 2004). In the words of Michel Rocard, however, “better a bad peace than a good war” (Connell 1988). It was perhaps in a climate more of exasperation than of enthusiasm that the Matignon Accords were thus concluded.

Key Aspects of the Accords

The Accords included an amnesty for political prisoners, a large amount of direct funding from France for economic and social development strategies, advances in territorial autonomy, a new administrative division of the dependency, and a new referendum on independence coupled with a redefined electoral body. The overall objectives were to end the plague of violence of recent years and to address the root causes of tension and conflict in New Caledonia, as well as to create a crucial ten-year transitional period leading up to a vote on the dependency's future which was to take place in 1998⁵⁹. Rocard described the agreement as “decolonisation within the framework of French institutions” (Rocard, cited in Connell, 1988, 17).

The element of the Matignon Accords that is perhaps most indicative of a break in convention for the French government was its consent to postpone the decision concerning New Caledonia's future for a period of ten years. As Cordonnier states, “for the first time, priority was not given to a hasty and botched solution, searching above all to satisfy electoral deadlines” (1995, 185). The decision to delay the referendum was beneficial because New Caledonians were in need of a settling down period to ‘*calmer les esprits*’ or ‘cool off’ after the shock of the Ouvéa Affair. Also, the referendum's postponement allowed both the FLNKS and the RPCR to continue to simultaneously pursue their divergent goals: independence for the former; remaining in the French Republic for the latter. The RPCR hoped that the economic development in Kanak areas borne out of the Accords would make the Kanaks see the benefit of the French presence in New Caledonia, thereby turning them away from their goal of independence. The Kanaks on the contrary intended on utilising the advances made in development and autonomy for the Independentist cause (Pitoiset, 1999, 185), notably in the administration experience they would accrue while being responsible for the management of their own regions. The Accords thus provided each group with a security blanket in which they could advance their own agenda. Lastly, for the French state the postponed referendum had at the very least preserved the its presence in the Pacific for the duration of ten more years⁶⁰.

⁵⁹ For detailed analyses of the Matignon Accords see Christnacht 2004, Maclellan and Chesneaux 1998, Henningham 1992.

⁶⁰ It was also an accomplishment of immense benefit to the political reputation of Michel Rocard, whose mediation skills in the Matignon Accords helped establish “the new image of a dynamic Prime

The most crucial aspect of the Matignon Accords was the question of who should be allowed to vote in the proposed referendum. It was eventually decided that the 1998 referendum would be open only to those voters who had been called to vote in the referendum seeking approval of the Matignon Accords: in other words, only those who had been continuously residing for ten years in New Caledonia could participate in the poll. This was an epic change to the structure of the electorate in New Caledonia, as it helped to place the Kanaks on a more even playing field by excluding the votes of new immigrants⁶¹ from bearing on the future of the country. The change was a momentous improvement on the residence requirement of a mere three years in of Pons's 1987 referendum, and 'purified' the electorate by excluding those voters who did not have a long-term investment in the future of the dependency.

Assessing the Effectiveness of the Matignon Accords

If the reduction of conflict is the primary criteria by which the success of the Matignon Accords is to be assessed, then they have indeed been of benefit to New Caledonia. The year 1988 marked the most grave episode of political violence of modern times at Ouvéa, but it also spawned an agreement between Independentists, Loyalists and the French State that such ethnic and political differences should never again take precedence over peace. But years of hostility and mistrust do not merely dissolve at the conclusion of a peace agreement: the assassination of Jean-Marie Tjibaou in the immediate post-Matignon environment is a testament to this fact. Nonetheless, it is undeniable that the Matignon Accords saw New Caledonia return to a state of calm for the first time in nearly a decade. Cordonnier posits in this way that

the year 1988 marks the end of an era, that of the splendid isolation of France in the South Pacific. The new approach by the metropolitan government to the New Caledonian problem and to the relations of France with the states of the region contributed to calming hostilities...Outstanding problems remained but it seemed, in 1988, possible to arrive at resolving them through consultation and dialogue. The era of confrontation and of unilateral measures seemed to be over" (Cordonnier, 1995, 189).

Christnacht similarly believes "the final result of the Matignon Accords is solid," pointing to such aspects as the economic re-balancing of the regions, the progressive

Minister, capable of putting an end to a colonial conflict in the tradition of Charles de Gaulle" (MacLellan and Chesneaux 1998).

⁶¹ As has been previously illustrated in this chapter, new immigrants to New Caledonia are commonly from metropolitan France, French Polynesia, or Wallis and Futuna, and have typically counterbalanced the Kanak vote in past polls by supporting the French presence in New Caledonia.

land reform without major conflict, and the emergence of a more pluri-ethnic spirit in the local population to suggest that the agreement has been successful (2004, 61).

Problems of the Matignon Accords

Unfortunately, the letter and spirit of such an ambitious peace agreement was in some cases far removed from its implementation on the ground. It had been noted for example that the process of economic rebalancing under the Matignon Accords had not led to the successful redistribution of development projects away from Noumea and the prosperous south, where tax breaks and other incentives have continued to attract investment⁶² (Maclellan and Chesneaux, 1998). The substantial advances made in regional autonomy and the powers devolved to Kanak-dominated regions to administer themselves were thus mitigated by the absence of means through which to make the regional economies viable⁶³. John Connell posited at that “in short, though the Accord has dramatically revised economic and political structures it has not disturbed key economic and political realities. It is not the first stage of a process of decolonisation but rather a brilliant cosmetic change” (Connell, 1992, 95).

Another concerning aspect of the Matignon Accords was the ambiguous role of the French State in the agreement, as it acted simultaneously as arbiter and as signatory. The Matignon Accords gave the French State the role of referee between the two opposed populations in New Caledonia, but “the French State ...is all but neutral in this affair. Not only is it the direct inheritor of all policies pursued by France in New Caledonia since 1853, not only is it responsible for the type of society that results from such policy, but it also remains a major historical actor upon which ‘decolonisation’, the founding principle of the Accords, ultimately depends” (Chesneaux and Maclellan, 1992, 169). France’s inherent desire to keep New

⁶² The South Pacific Forum’s special mission to New Caledonia in August 1997 noted: “the goal of economic rebalancing has, however, not led to the establishment of major industrial sectors in the North to counterbalance the economic weight of Noumea. The economic benefit of the Accords have been felt less where the population is mostly Kanak” Forum Ministerial Visit to New Caledonia 11-14 August 1997, Report to the 28th South Pacific Forum (photocopy, Rarotonga, Cook Islands, September 1997).

⁶³ A round-table meeting held in May 1994 by New Caledonia’s largest Protestant church similarly found many lingering problems in the implementation of the Matignon Accords, including the continued control of business and tourism by foreign and multinational companies, a land redistribution scheme that continued to be of principal benefit to Europeans, the uninterrupted immigration from France increasing local unemployment, and indications of a worsening social malaise (Maclellan and Chesneaux 1998).

Caledonia within the Republic would thus appear incompatible with its ultimate control over a peace agreement that allows for the possibility of decolonisation.

Finally, while the period of ten years may have seemed long to both Independentists and Loyalists at the outset of the Accords⁶⁴, “the ever-approaching deadline confirmed to all that the necessary time required for the evolution of a society does not necessarily conform to a political calendar” (Christnacht, 2004, 62). It became apparent that the ten year lead-up to the referendum on self-determination would be insufficient for successfully defusing the possibility of future violence in the dependency. In his personal account of the problems faced in New Caledonia, former RPCR leader Jacques Lafleur recounts his response to the dilemma posed by the impending referendum:

I affirmed that we needed to do everything necessary to avoid the make-or-break referendum of 1998 that consisted of saying “yes” or “no” to independence. I explained that [the Loyalists] were certain to win this referendum, and that everyone knew it both here and in the metropole. In this way New Caledonia would remain a part of France but would it would only be a Pyrrhic victory. Our victory would marginalise a defeated Kanak Independentist minority, and it was certain that eventually this minority, deprived of power after having been granted it by the Matignon Accords, would rally around a racism that would harden with time (2000, 181).

It must be recalled that the success of the Matignon Accords and the future peace of the dependency were contingent on the outcome of those initiatives targeted to more evenly distribute New Caledonia’s economic, political and social strata. As Lafleur illustrates above, the Matignon Accords had not succeeded in sufficiently improving the core problems in New Caledonia to ensure that the independence poll of 1998 would take place peacefully.

Nonetheless, the success of the Matignon Accords in pulling the dependency back from the brink of civil war is indisputable, and the problems outlined above should not overshadow this fact. France had turned its combative policy of the Chirac-Pons

⁶⁴ The hard-line within the FLNKS were frustrated that the prospect of independence would be out of reach for a minimum of ten more years, while the hard-line within the RPCR believed that the independence question had already been settled definitively in the Chirac-Pons administration’s referendum of 1987.

era into one of mediation and dialogue, and the once viciously opposed political leaders Lafleur and Tjibaou had come together to convince the New Caledonian people that peace was the only way for the dependency to move forward. However, the desire to avoid the make-or-break referendum in 1998 led to the creation of a successor peace agreement, the Noumea Accord, signed in the same year.

The Noumea Accord: May 5 1998

The underlying philosophy of the Matignon Accords was therefore extended upon by the Noumea Accord, an agreement between the French State, the RPCR, and the FLNKS. The Accord was signed on May 5 1998 and was affirmed by a resounding 71.8 per cent of New Caledonian voters on November 8 of the same year, entering into force by the French organic law n° 99-209 of March 19 1999. Like its predecessor, the Noumea Accord laid the foundations for a new relationship between New Caledonia and France (Queyranne, 2000), namely that of ‘shared sovereignty’⁶⁵. At the same time, it sought to uphold the peace achieved in the Matignon era through a consensual approach to the dependency’s future. The Noumea Accord required a revision of the French Constitution on July 20 1998, and is now addressed through the inclusion in the Constitution of Title XIII, ‘Transitional Provisions for New Caledonia.’

The Matignon and the Noumea Accords have many similarities, the provisions of the latter (particularly in the sphere of *rééquilibrage* or ‘rebalancing’ New Caledonia’s wealth and resources) often extending upon or seeking to improve those of the former. Like its predecessor, the Noumea Accord was accepted by the New Caledonian people for different reasons, with the Independentists understanding that more time and development was needed in order to transform New Caledonia into the State of Kanaky⁶⁶, and the Loyalists believing that the benefits of development and rebalancing would eventually convince the Independentists to remain with the French Republic.

⁶⁵ For general reading on the concept of ‘shared sovereignty’, read (in French) Jean-Yves Faberon & Guy Agniel, *La Souveraineté Partagée en Nouvelle-Calédonie et en Droit Comparé*, La Documentation Française 2000.

⁶⁶ Since the establishment of the provisional government by the independence movement in 1984, ‘Kanaky’ is the name employed by Kanaks to refer to an independent and sovereign New Caledonia.

The Originalities

The Noumea Accord provides for an irrevocable process leading ultimately to independence, if the desire is manifested by the New Caledonian people (De Deckker, 2004b). The groundbreaking quality is seen first and foremost in its recognition that the political, social and economic particularities of New Caledonia have not been properly catered for by France's traditional approach to managing its territories. Pitoiset states that "contrarily to a Jacobin tradition that tends to squash realities into predefined legal categories, the negotiators relied upon the realities to elaborate a new status" (1999, 210). An epic break with convention and legal norms is therefore recognised to be necessary to create a tailor-made plan for New Caledonia's future. As such, the concept of New Caledonian citizenship (as distinct from French citizenship) has been created, and Kanak identity (as distinct from French identity) has been addressed through the definition of customary rights and laws, the recognition of the role of traditional authorities through the establishment of a sixteen-member Customary Senate, and the protection and promotion of Kanak cultural heritage. Measures pertaining to land ownership have been further revised in order to redress ownership imbalances brought about by past policies.

Shared Sovereignty

Of central importance is the notion of 'shared sovereignty': powers are shared between the French State and New Caledonia. The agreement provides for the gradual and irreversible transfer of powers from the mainland to the territorial government⁶⁷, in accordance with a defined timeline. The successful completion of this process will leave France in control of only the 'regalian powers' of justice, law and order, defence, currency, and a certain degree of foreign affairs (Queyranne, 2000). In this way, New Caledonia is no longer a *territoire d'outre-mer*; it is a *territoire sui generis*. In common parlance however, New Caledonia is now referred to as a *pays d'outre-mer*, or 'overseas country.'

Self-Determination and Citizenship

The aspect of the agreement that will undoubtedly have the biggest hand in shaping New Caledonia's future is the provision for a final referendum on self-determination,

⁶⁷ The organic law defines New Caledonia's new institutional organisation as "the Congress, the Government, the Customary Senate, the Social and Economic Council and the Customary Councils" (Article 2, Loi no 99-209 du mars 1999 organique relative à la Nouvelle-Calédonie). See supplementary information on the territorial government see **Appendix #1: Supplementary Information on New Caledonia, French Polynesia and Wallis-and-Futuna.**

to be organised during the fourth four-year term of the Congress some time between 2014 and 2019 (Garde, 2000). Should independence be decided upon, the remaining *régalian* powers held by the French state will be transferred to New Caledonia, entailing full accession to sovereignty (Queyranne, 2000).

In preparation for this referendum, a New Caledonian *citizenship* has been created within the overall framework of French nationality, in order to confer special voting and labour rights upon those who can demonstrate a proven investment in New Caledonia's future. New Caledonian citizenship includes those who had been living in the dependency for at least ten years by the time of the Noumea Accord in 1998 (or put in another way, those who were also involved in the Matignon Accord process of 1988). Crucially, it is only New Caledonian citizens who will be able to vote in the referendum on self-determination. The concept of citizenship may also assist in reducing social tensions through the creation of a common and unified identity (Pitoiset, 1999).

This redefinition of the electoral body means that the residence requirement for the impending referendum has been extended to twenty years, marking another significant pegging back of electoral eligibility in New Caledonia⁶⁸. The result of the impending referendum will of course be the principal determining factor in how New Caledonia will progress towards the future, and the establishment of a citizenship excludes more of the ephemeral, pro-French electorate from the poll than ever before.

Problems with the Noumea Accord

From the outset it was clear that the potential difficulties posed by such an ambitious agreement – with no historical or legal precedent in the French Republic – would be numerous. At the ceremony marking the signature of the agreement, former Prime Minister Michel Rocard made light of its legal awkwardness by jibing that he was “savouring... the perplexity of professors of public law faced with the originality and peculiarity of the constitutional object the people of New Caledonia have just invented together” (Rocard, cited in Lafleur, 2000, 220). The recognition of Kanak

⁶⁸ Let it be recalled that a mere three years residence was required for voting eligibility in the referendum of 1987, and that ten years residence would have been required for the referendum of 1998.

identity, the creation of New Caledonian citizenship, and the subsequent restriction of the electoral body have perplexed many commentators, who perceive such “constitutional horrors” (Pitoiset, 1999, 213) as dangerous and divisive⁶⁹.

Indeed, a degree of identity-based tension and conflict continues to pervade the New Caledonian landscape. In June 2005 it was reported that a group of metropolitan French residents had formed an association to express their concern that the creation of New Caledonian citizenship had conferred them a second-class status⁷⁰. Saint-Louis, a customary land on the outskirts of Noumea, continues to be the site of tense and often violent stand-offs between Kanaks and Polynesian settlers from Wallis and Futuna⁷¹. In addition, these lingering problems are accompanied by recent changes at the local political level, where the delicate political balance between Independentists and Loyalists has been upset⁷². Such issues fuel fears that the Noumea Accord may be incapable of healing the ‘us and them’ mentality created by years of mistrust.

Others, however, interpret these events as blips on a positive radar. Alain Christnacht cites the fact that the communities of New Caledonia are not interchangeable in their organisation, history or culture in order to illustrate the importance of an explicit recognition of their specificities: the aim of the constitutional adjustments is thus not to divide the peoples of New Caledonia but to bring them together (Christnacht, cited in Faberon and Agniel, 2000, 66). Francine Webert similarly feels that “...the fact that

⁶⁹ The fundamental problem is that the French Constitution persists in the affirmation of a sole French people, single and undivided, and consequently refuses to acknowledge the existence of indigenous peoples on its soil (Francine Webert, ‘L’Ordre Juridique Français : de la Centralisation à la Souveraineté Partagée’ in Faberon 2000.) The recognition of the existence of a Kanak people in the Preamble to the Noumea Accord is therefore contradictory to the French tradition of cultural assimilation as outlined by the Constitution (François Garde, ‘Brèves Observations sur la Loi Organique du 19 Mars 1999 relative à la Nouvelle-Calédonie’ in Faberon 2000). Jean-Pierre Doumenge thus believes that “[t]he recognition of the Kanak specificity and the legal measures accompanying it sanction a societal duality that will always carry the seed, if one is not careful, of risks of segregation at the heart New Caledonia’s social structure” (‘Le Contexte Socio-Économique’ in Faberon 2000).

⁷⁰ The group boycotted a territorial census carried out in September 2004, telling surveyors that they did not want to partake in the body count because they felt they were not regarded as citizens and were being counted “just to pay tax” (Patrick Antoine Decloitre, ‘Controversial New Caledonia Census Shows Growth’, *Pacific Islands Report* 2005).

⁷¹ See **Appendix #2: Saint-Louis: Inter-ethnic Hostilities in the New Caledonia’s post-Noumea Accord Environment.**

⁷² See **Appendix #3: Recent Political Developments and Problems with ‘Collegiality’ in New Caledonia.**

the Noumea Accord brought about a peaceful solution to the New Caledonian problem should justify the specificity of the statute of 1999” (2000, 73).

The ‘Subsidy Trap’

Another worrying issue is the apparent contradiction posed by the prospect of independence for New Caledonia on the one hand, and a highly subsidised and artificial economy on the other. Pitoiset refers to this situation as the *subsidy trap*: “in favouring an assisted economy, France has placed itself in a contradictory position: politically, it espouses the will to decolonise the dependency, but economically, it creates an artificial wealth that pulls the country down into a spiral of growing imbalance” (Pitoiset, 1999, 194). The chronic dependence on financial transfers from metropolitan France has long been a central characteristic of New Caledonia’s economy, and has been cited by many authors as a barrier to achieving greater self-reliance⁷³.

At the same time, a central aspect of both the Matignon and Noumea agreements has been the commitment of France to effect large-scale economic development and rebalance social inequalities, entailing in each case massive financial transfers. It has been suggested recently that the evolution to full sovereignty would entail a decline of 25% to 30% of New Caledonia’s Gross Domestic Product (Faberon and Agniel, 2000, 71). “Unfortunately”, writes Pitoiset, “far from having constituted an encouragement to private initiative, the money granted by the State has moreover had a tendency to sustain a mentality of assistantship.” She then notes that ten years after the Matignon Accords the transfers from the State represented 50% of the net resources of New Caledonia, without really managing to change in depth the economic and social structures (1999, 203). Finally, it must be acknowledged that “assistantship is not the natural access path to sovereignty” (Doumenge, 2000, 57).

The Nickel Dimension⁷⁴

⁷³ See Pitoiset 1999, Maclellan and Chesneaux 1998, Doumenge in Faberon 2000.

⁷⁴ For a comprehensive analysis of contemporary nickel mining in New Caledonia see Leah S Horowitz, ‘Toward a viable independence? The Koniambo project and the political economy of mining in New Caledonia’ in *The Contemporary Pacific* v16 i2 p287 (2004).

It has long been acknowledged that the most likely way for New Caledonia to escape such a 'subsidy trap' is through the exploitation of nickel. Unlike French Polynesia, New Caledonia has abundant natural resources, and is believed to hold between a quarter and a third of the world's nickel reserves. Aside from financial transfers from France, the exploitation of these nickel deposits has long been vital for the dependency's economic stability, and thus figure largely in the Noumea Accord.

In 1990, Jacques Lafleur sold his privately owned nickel company *La Société Minière du Sud-Pacifique* (SMSP) to Sofinor, the economic development agency of New Caledonia's Northern Province, in a Matignon Accord-motivated political gesture to grant Kanaks access to the highly symbolic mining sector (Christnacht, 2004, 63). This has since paved the way for the Bercy Accord of 1998, an agreement between the Northern Province's SMSP, the French Government, and the Canadian nickel giant Falconbridge to construct a nickel plant in the Koniambo basin. Under the agreement, the Northern Province government retains 51 percent ownership, and Falconbridge the remaining 49%. Once completed the project is expected to yield some 60,000 metric tons of nickel per year, and is regarded as key to the future rebalancing of wealth between Noumea and the provinces. This initiative is running in conjunction with another project for a metallurgical factory in the Southern Province, 'Goro Nickel,' backed by the Canadian company Inco. The two projects are expected to increase New Caledonia's GDP by a third (De Deckker, 2004b, 17). However, they have recently become entangled in controversy due to several factors pertaining to the terms of the 1998 Bercy Accord, mine title ownership rights, and environmental concerns, and have created significant amounts of civil unrest and disturbance in New Caledonia.

In the Southern Province, the Goro Nickel project has been threatened by the Kanak environmentalist group, which has sought to prevent its construction citing a lack of any guarantees on the protection of the environment. After being unsuccessful in a legal bid to have Goro Nickel's exploration licence revoked, Kanak activists erected road blockades and vandalised the operation, resulting in violent clashes with riot police and sixteen arrests. The large-scale vandalism caused US \$10 million of

damage to equipment, forcing Goro to lay off around 1300 people. Since then, the preliminary ruling of an administrative tribunal in Noumea has upheld a complaint by Reebu Nuu that the environmental impact study conducted by Goro was patently inadequate. This decision incited a demonstration of thousands of people in Noumea on June 5 2006 demanding a stop to the project. Goro however has vowed to continue its operation, warning that a suspension of the project would have a dramatic impact on the dependency's economy, as well as on the families of the 1800 workers on the site. French scientists have since returned to New Caledonia for further discussion on the environmental impact of the project, and public discussions on the future of the Goro project have been called, with the outcome yet uncertain.

The extremely high stakes involved in establishing a nickel-based economy in New Caledonia have thus threatened New Caledonia's economic-industrial and social stability. As has been illustrated by the example of its majority share in Eramet, France has at times been placed in the extremely difficult position of having to willingly incur financial losses for the sake of New Caledonia's future prosperity, and to its credit it has consistently acted in a way to prove its commitment to the Noumea Accord process⁷⁵. With regard to the yet unresolved Goro project, France's involvement will need to be gauged on how well it mediates between the legitimate concerns of Kanak environmental activists, Inco, and the necessity to prepare New Caledonia's economy for the possibility of independence. The importance of France remaining impartial is paramount, and the Goro project will only progress in a peaceful manner if France avoids allegations of pursuing economic imperatives without due respect for the wishes of local groups.

Conclusion of Noumea Accord

The eventual outcome of the Noumea Accord process is unclear for the time being, and in particular the question of whether or not the Noumea Accord will provide the level playing field required for the upcoming referendum on independence. Not surprisingly, the high stakes inextricably linked with such a crucial vote have made it

⁷⁵ Once the Koniambo deal became threatened by a legal challenge from Eramet, France acted with the welfare of the Northern Province in mind, offering tax holidays and pledging a further US \$620 million to the project so that that Falconbridge's December 2005 deadline would not be missed (Oceania Flash 2005).

difficult to discern objective political forecasts from impassioned rhetoric. Former military General Michel Franceschi exemplifies the latter when he describes the Noumea Accord as “nothing more than a clever politico-judicial montage or *machination* insidiously leaving no other outcome than eventual independence in New Caledonia” (Franceschi, 1998, 398). Others like Pitoiset, Christnacht and Lafleur however are optimistic about France’s conviction to leave the final decision in the hands of New Caledonian citizens.

To date, the Noumea Accord has consolidated the general peace established under the Matignon Accords and has extended upon its central tenets. This is particularly so with regard to indigenous rights, regional autonomy, land reform and economic development. The success of both the Matignon and Noumea Accords in channelling discord over the independence issue to the negotiating table has made the violence of the 1980s a distant – yet not forgotten – memory for most New Caledonians. Moreover, the ‘shared sovereignty’ with France and creation of New Caledonian citizenship has sown the seed an emerging national identity. Pitoiset can thus write of “the invention of a shared destiny” (Pitoiset, 1999, 198), while Lafleur writes of “hope, to conclude” (Lafleur, 2000, 235).

However, potential difficulties remain both within the Noumea Accord itself, and at the level of New Caledonia’s social and economic realities. The problems associated with New Caledonian citizenship, electoral eligibility, collegiality at government level, nickel industry development, and lasting inter-ethnic conflict could all potentially affect the impending referendum on independence, and subsequently determine whether or not there will be lasting peace. The Committee of Reflection for the Future of New Caledonia stated of the Noumea Accord that “its success will depend...on the rapidity of the setting in place of the first reforms, the evolution of relationships between interior political forces, and on the nature and depth of the economic and financial reforms on which the text stayed remarkably discrete” (Pitoiset, 1999, 215). Stability in the long term will depend not on one factor in particular, but instead on the complex and to a certain extent unpredictable interrelationship between those aspects outlined above.

Aside from these issues, the dubious position of France as both signatory to and referee of the Noumea Accord begs the question of whether it can manage the agreement towards a fair and unbiased outcome. French subsidisation of the New Caledonian economy may in itself be a persuasive reminder of the benefits attached with the *tricolour*. On the other hand, in a dispute pertaining to voter eligibility for provincial elections, France recently ruled in favour of the Kanak interpretation of the Noumea Accord: that the electorate should be ‘frozen’ to those who were on the roll of 1998⁷⁶. It thus suggests that France is indeed acting impartially in Loyalist-Independentist related disputes (2006r). For France to be successful in providing a level playing field for the referendum it must walk the tight-rope along the Noumea Accord process, being careful not to give either the pro or anti-independence parties the opportunity to incite further conflict under the pretext of French favouritism.

Tentative Hypothesis for the Future of New Caledonia

What does the future hold for New Caledonia? At the time of writing, the progress of the Noumea Accord is such that speculating on its outcome is extremely difficult. Not yet half-way through its process, the social and economic rebalancing measures instigated by the agreement are still in their implementation phase. As the agreement draws nearer to the referendum in 2019, there will be changes in the make-up of New Caledonia’s voting population, changes in economic circumstances, changes in power at the local political level, and changes in power in Paris⁷⁷. In the nickel sector, it remains to be seen whether the Koniambo and Goro projects – if and when they become fully operational – will have a positive impact on local GDP. In the political sphere, much will depend on the ability of the opposing local parties to both effectively liaise with France and shore up crucial votes at home.

In spite of such uncertainty, it will nonetheless be useful to explore all the possible scenarios that are likely to emerge from the Noumea Accord process, and comment on their implications for the future peace and stability of New Caledonia.

⁷⁶ This ruling was contrary to the position of Loyalists, who had argued for a ‘sliding’ electorate that would allow any resident of ten years or more to vote in provincial elections.

⁷⁷ The first round of the French Presidential elections begins on April 22 2007.

Scenario One: The Noumea Accord Founders

The Noumea Accord could collapse due to any number or combination of the various difficulties outlined above, ranging from insufficient territorial rebalancing to divisive power jostling among local politicians. Moreover, the agreement may yet prove incapable of easing the feelings of political and inter-ethnic hostility fermented by the French policies of old⁷⁸. Generally speaking, a failure would profoundly disappoint the vast majority of New Caledonians who – with the exception of hard-core dissidents from the extreme left and right – have enjoyed the peace borne out of the Noumea Accord. It is thus conceivable that the agreement could fail in peaceful circumstances, whereby the local population would wait for a globally acceptable alternative to the Noumea Accord in a climate of calm.

On the other hand, the failure to reach any definitive conclusion to the Accord may disillusion and frustrate the New Caledonian people, who have been awaiting a final verdict on the question of self-determination since 1987. The failure of the agreement could be used by both Independentists and Loyalists as evidence to suggest that negotiation and dialogue are futile, thereby paving the way for a new phase of political hostility in the dependency. Loyalists and Independentists could again take up arms as they did in the late 1980s to seek the advancement of their political goals, and to defend themselves against the threatening ‘other’.

In the first instance, the collapse of the agreement and the subsequent potential for violence would necessarily oblige France to revise its Constitution and take back a portion of its administrative control of the dependency. This would be in order to either fill the power vacuum left by a foundering local political system, or to re-impose the law and order that had not ultimately been attained under the preventative peace agreement. Secondly, given that France has never before granted such a high degree of political and economic autonomy to one of its dependencies, the failure of the ‘Noumea experiment’ may signal an end to France’s willingness to explore other shared sovereignty arrangements in future. This rationalisation could conceivably act as a basis for the tightening of control over French Polynesia, and the gradual re-

⁷⁸ The lobbying and political mobilisation that will undoubtedly intensify as the independence referendum draws near may dredge up old hostilities that have lain dormant during the intermediary phase of calm.

imposition of Paris-based administrative control against the wishes of its South Pacific populations. In other words, the progress made by France of late in taking better account of the needs and specificities of its South Pacific satellites could quickly be undone. Thirdly, such a failure could attract the attention and involvement of the wider South Pacific and international community. The praise France has received from the Pacific Islands Forum in recent years for its constructive approach to nation-building in New Caledonia could be replaced by a condemnation of its re-imposition of colonial control, and France's South Pacific dependencies could soon find themselves ostracised by the wider region in a manner reminiscent of the 1980s.

Such a scenario is highly undesirable, though Christnacht states that it "should be able to be avoided" (2004, 152). It has been suggested that the events at Ouvéa may have permanently galvanised all New Caledonians against the advancement of one's cause through violent means. Should the Noumea Accord fail in its objective, it will be widely hoped that this suggestion will ring true.

Scenario Two: New Caledonia Becomes Independent

Should the New Caledonian people be "convinced of the favourable evolution of New Caledonia" (Christnacht, 2004, 152) they may vote for independence from France, whereby the newly-created country would undergo a miasma of political, economic and social transformations⁷⁹.

On the political scene, such a change is likely to be accompanied by a period of inevitable instability, as the local political system responds to an unsettled and evolving electorate⁸⁰ with changing expectations of its leaders. For the Loyalists, the vote for independence will undoubtedly arouse feelings of insecurity about the future, and anxiety over how they will be treated in the new state. There is a possibility that a militant core within the Loyalists may seek to provoke conflict in reaction to the new independence, either to sabotage the viability of the new state, thereby hoping to

⁷⁹ The accession to sovereign statehood would above all entail the withdrawal of France from the administrative workings of New Caledonia, and the powers of justice, law and order, currency and international personality would be bestowed for the first time in full upon the New Caledonian State.

⁸⁰ It is possible that independence for New Caledonia would provoke a certain proportion of New Caledonia's Loyalist population to return to France, thereby increasing the concentration of pro-independence sentiment in the country.

necessitate fresh intervention from France, or as a means to secession. But such a scenario is unlikely: France would undoubtedly seek to maintain close links with this community.

The extent and size of the French withdrawal is difficult to foresee. A question mark also hangs over the level of funding that would continue to come from the French Government. In any case, a complete pull-out would be unlikely. Former Secretary of State for the South Pacific Bruno Gain suggests that France would be incapable of withdrawing completely, and believes moreover that it is not in the French *tradition* to completely sever ties with its former colonies. The examples of the French African States serve to illustrate that French influence has come to complement the accession to sovereignty. Furthermore, Gain does not foresee the risk of a severing of French financial assistance in the event of New Caledonia's independence⁸¹. Christnacht similarly imagines a scenario of "independence with *guarantees*, like double-nationality and aid maintained by France...(2004, 152) [emphasis added]. However, while the reductions in funding would nonetheless be substantial, and the independent New Caledonia would need to rely in the first instance on its own economy. The performance and vitality of the nickel industry will thus be crucial in taking up the slack left by reduced French subsidies.

Scenario Three: New Caledonia remains a part of France

The New Caledonian people may opt to remain within the French Republic due to the following circumstances:

1. *Electoral reality*. The combined Loyalist vote of Caldoche settlers, metropolitan residents classified as New Caledonian citizens and other immigrant groups to remain within the French Republic proves too large for the nonetheless substantial vote for independence.
2. *Changing Attitudes*. Satisfied with the positive change brought to the Kanak-dominated provinces by economic and social rebalancing, and satisfied with

⁸¹ Interview with S.E.M. Bruno Gain conducted at the French Ministry for Overseas, Paris, December 19 2006.

the input of France throughout the process, a sufficient number of previously pro-independence Kanaks may change their vote in favour of remaining within the French Republic.

Such a scenario would entail some form of continuation of the status quo, namely the advancement of the Noumea Accord process. The New Caledonian people would remain French nationals within the Republic, as well as New Caledonian citizens as defined by the Noumea Accord. The conditions for future access to this citizenship would be clearly prescribed, to protect the fragile societal balance against any massive accession of French nationals to New Caledonian citizenship in future. New Caledonia would likely see its autonomy further extended over time, including in the domain of more historically important powers, such as Foreign Policy (Christnacht, 2004, 152). However, competencies of importance to the wider Republic would most likely remain with France, such as Defence and Law and Order. France would need to retain a high level of financial commitment to the long-term projects initiated by the Noumea Accord, particularly the rebalancing of New Caledonia's wealth and resources and the development of the local economy. Should the local economy prove to be incapable of reaching a point of self-reliance in the long-term, the New Caledonian people would expect France to sustain it through continued assistance.

The vote to remain within the French Republic is likely to frustrate a core of long-time independence activists, mainly Kanak, whose disappointment over their defeat in the referendum could incite them to again destabilise the dependency. Such action may include the refusal to recognise the referendum as a fair and legitimate consultation, the use of militant tactics, or the attempt to spark a break-away secessionist movement. The disgruntled group would likely attempt to involve the wider international community, as was successfully achieved by the FLNKS in the 1980s, in order to affirm their UN-inscribed right to self-determination. While the return to violence in the event of a vote against independence is unlikely, it will nonetheless be vital for France to maintain dialogue with such a group and to recognise it as a legitimate voice within New Caledonia, lest another period of violent political confrontation be created through the marginalisation and unequal treatment of dissatisfied communities.

The long-term implications of a vote to keep New Caledonia in the French Republic are likely to be more positive than negative. If France continues its current trend of adopting policy that is tailored to the specificities of its dependencies, the various communities living in New Caledonia will likely one day reach the point where they can for the most part prosperously co-exist under continued French sovereignty. The so-called Melanesian ‘arc of instability’ is a grim reminder of the fact that independence does not necessarily entail happiness in the current global environment.

In a conference discussing the notion of ‘shared independence’ in 2000, Christnacht observed that “[i]n the contemporary world, the notion of independence is more and more complex and the intermediary statuses between full sovereignty and non-sovereignty are more and more numerous” (Christnacht, cited in Faberon and Agniel, 2000, 70). A situation of advanced self-government may thus be preferable to a sovereignty that comes at an inestimable cost. The necessary precondition to this, however, is that the Noumea Accord successfully achieves its goals of rebalancing and development in a way that benefits the entire New Caledonian people. Should the vote for continued ties with France not be accompanied by such changes, the call for a full and definitive independence will continue to emanate from a community that perceives its future as being better served by a total French withdrawal.

Scenario Four: the Referendum on Self-Determination is again Deferred

The approaching referendum deadline may reveal to the New Caledonian people that they are unready for the consultation, as was the case in the lead-up to the planned referendum of 1998. Furthermore, as the deadline approaches it may become apparent to all concerned that New Caledonian society has not developed a sufficiently tolerant and pluri-ethnic spirit to rule out the possibility of conflict in the aftermath of the vote. In the face of such a situation the New Caledonian people may, in consultation with the French State, further defer the crucial referendum on self-determination in order to preserve the climate of peace in New Caledonian society, and to maintain a level of constructive input from France.

Indeed, such a solution has already been suggested by one of the figureheads of the Noumea Accord process. In front of a crowd of 10,000 supporters at an RPCR rally in 2004, Jacques Lafleur predicted that “no-one will want to go to the referendum”, stating that “[i]ndependence has become just a word, a dream...So why not let the people dream, why not let them have the feeling that they have not lost, but that we have all won together?” (Pacific Islands Report, 2005) Certainly, if the referendum can be conceptualised as a competition that will divide New Caledonia into ‘winners’ and ‘losers’, casting the vote further into the future would avoid – for the duration of the interim period at least – this bipolar division of New Caledonian society. It is also true that neither the Independentists nor the Loyalists will want for the referendum to go ahead until they have a degree of certainty about their own chances of success. A further delay could thus be useful for both political camps to shore up the support they deem necessary to prevail at the ballot box, and with the agreement of all parties such a delay could last as long as required to establish a society that will peacefully accept either outcome.

Christnacht explained that the referendum of 1998 needed to be avoided because the time necessary for the evolution of a society does not always adhere to a political calendar (2004, 62). If this proves to again be the case for the referendum of 2019, the decision to once more defer the vote may be the most simple means of providing both sides with a peaceful way out of a potential conflict that no-one wants.

Chapter Conclusion

In the period of 1985 to 2006, New Caledonia has been transformed from a dependency of inequality, inter-ethnic hostility and political violence into a ‘country’ of citizens, tentatively working towards a common future. This transformation has been shown to result from a change in France’s approach to dealing with the New Caledonian problem. Both the Socialist and Conservative governments in the 1980s took reactive and ill-timed approaches to New Caledonian conflict. Edgard Pisani’s plan of independence-in-association was ill-timed, unrealistic in its quick-fix timeframe, and was not formulated in consultation with the opposed local populations. On the other hand, the Pons era was characterised by the heavy-handed

and repressive approach to the independence movement, a marked political bias toward the Loyalists, and even less regard for the local populations through its insistence on holding the contentious referendum on self-determination in 1987. In a broader sense, the stark difference in approach taken by the Socialist and Conservative administrations illustrates the clear lack of cohesion in formulating solutions to the New Caledonian problem at a government level, and the inability of a Paris-centric resolution method to grasp the particularities of the conflict on the ground in France's most distant dependency.

Such problems reached a crescendo in 1988 with the Ouvéa hostage situation, an event that provided the impetus for all parties concerned with New Caledonia's future to develop a more inclusive, consensual and peaceful approach to resolving the dependency's difficulties. It is in light of this change in ideology that the Matignon Accords can be explained. Though the Matignon Accords were not without difficulty, France succeeded in forging a peace agreement that secured a lasting peace for the dependency. The fact that peace endured in spite of the assassination of Jean-Marie Tjibaou supports this claim.

The Matignon Accords also contained the first form of recognition that conflict in New Caledonia would only be avoided through a concerted effort to address underlying social and economic inequalities. As such, the concept of *rééquilibrage* or rebalancing was born. Gilles Blanchet suggested in 1996 that a central flaw in France's approach to New Caledonia was that it sought to re-work administrative arrangements without addressing more fundamental issues on the ground:

New Caledonia has experienced an indefatigable succession of statuses and administrative changes: between 1985 and 1989 they changed annually, all of them opening transitional periods that were supposed to end with a referendum on self-determination. None of these eventuated, except for the referendum of 1987 that was boycotted by the Independentists. Each time that a crisis has opposed the communities on the ground and public order has been threatened, the State has sought to quell the situation and offer a solution that is acceptable for all concerned...One is nonetheless left to wonder what can be the use of statutory modifications that, at repeated intervals, reorganise the sharing of powers between the State and the dependency always without trying to attack the base inequalities that prevail between the ethnic communities, notably between Europeans and Kanaks (1996, 52).

If it is true that France once sought to address the symptoms and not the causes of conflict in New Caledonia, the provision for rebalancing in the Matignon Accords thereby marks an historic moment in France's approach.

Ten years later, the continual progress made by France in the domain of New Caledonian stability is illustrated in the Noumea Accord. The shortcomings of the Matignon Accords have been revised and updated. The conviction to set constitutional precedents, to break the mould of its traditional administrative framework, and to reconceptualise its own role as sovereign power bears testimony to France's increasing commitment to find solutions that suit the New Caledonian people and their unique situation. Equally compelling evidence is the irreversible nature of the Noumea Accord process, thereby protecting the wishes of the New Caledonian people from the political agendas of future French governments.

With the future as yet uncertain, the eventual success of the Noumea Accord will depend upon the success of a complex interrelationship of factors. The continued French commitment to territorial rebalancing and the decolonisation process, the emergence of a viable nickel-based economy, local political stability and collegiality, and a fair electoral process for the decision on self-determination will all have a significant influence. Finally however, ultimate responsibility for forging a peaceful, united and prosperous New Caledonia lies just as much with the New Caledonian people as it does with France. Crucially, the French contribution to securing a peaceful New Caledonia must be complemented by a sustained local commitment to the same cause, and it is thus only in a co-operative spirit that this peaceful evolution can be realised.

In the years to come France has the opportunity to shed any stigma that remains from its colonial past in New Caledonia. This can be achieved by continuing to give New Caledonia the tools to realise its own destiny, and in a manner that impartially mediates between the pro- and anti-independence communities. If New Caledonia wishes to remain French, it should not be due to any engineering on the part of the French government. If it asks for independence, then France must allow it to be realised in an amicable way. In either case, France can continue to make a positive contribution through maintaining close ties with the 'country' with whom it has

historically shared such a close relationship. The recent experience of former colonies elsewhere in the Pacific would suggest that the viability of newly-formed states relies in large part on the support they receive from well-established and benevolent friends. Whether or not New Caledonia requests independence, it is perhaps with this in mind that France can continue to play a positive role in its former colony.

Chapter 5: the Impact of France on Conflict and Stability in French Polynesia

To the people of the South Pacific region the mere mention of France's engagement in French Polynesia conjures a raft of sinister connotations. The historically stormy relationship between France and French Polynesia has been the object of epic criticism and debate ever since France's decision to implant its nuclear testing programme (the *Centre National d'Expérimentations Nucléaires du Pacifique* or 'CEP') on the atolls of Moruroa and Fangataufa in the early 1960s. In fact, it is not overly simplistic to suggest that it is this singular event that accounts almost entirely for the regional perception of France in the present day. Justified or not, the story of the testing programme has developed into a modern-day South Pacific fairytale, recounting the struggle of a defenceless local community against a malevolent overlord from afar. For many the experience of French Polynesia has cast a permanent shadow on the reputation of France in the South Pacific, and though nuclear testing ended in 1996, elements of the 'nuclear legacy' continue to manifest themselves in the dependency to this day.

This case study will examine the impact that France has had on stability and political evolution in French Polynesia over the time period of 1985 to 2006. While it is not the intention here to provide a historical account of the CEP⁸², its impact will nonetheless be intertwined with an analysis of France's role in the stability of French Polynesia. This is because the period of enquiry captures a considerable amount of time in which nuclear tests were still being conducted in the territory, and it will be shown that the testing programme in itself was a seriously destabilising force in French Polynesia, provoking significant conflict and unrest in the form of strikes and riots.

⁸² French nuclear testing in French Polynesia has been the subject of myriad books, theses, accounts and analyses. For general reading see Stephen Henningham, *France in the South Pacific: a Contemporary Analysis*, Allen & Unwin 1992; Jean Chesneaux and Nic Maclellan, *La France dans le Pacifique: de Bougainville à Moruroa*, La Découverte 1992; Nancy Pollock and Ron Crocombe (Eds.), *French Polynesia: a Book of Selected Readings*, USP 1988; Bengt and Marie-Thérèse Danielsson, 'Tahiti: In Bondage to the Bomb' in David Robie (Ed.), *Tu Galala: Social Change in the Pacific*, Bridget Williams & Pluto 1992.

The second reason is that the now dismantled CEP has so considerably impacted on all aspects of French Polynesian life that it has become endemic to many of the dependency's problems in the post-nuclear era. The creation of a 'nuclear economy' will be explained to account for many issues that continue to have a negative impact on French Polynesia's stability in the contemporary environment, including:

- the rapid transition from a subsistence-based to a service-based economy;
- a high level of dependency on France for financial transfers;
- a hypertrophied and pampered public sector;
- the acclimatisation of a local middle class to abnormally high living standards;
- a large socioeconomic disparity between social groups;
- unemployment, delinquency and a worsening social malaise.

Such factors will be shown to be blighting French Polynesia in the post-CEP era by fermenting political tension, impeding territorial development and creating rifts in local society.

The year 2006 marked the ten-year anniversary of the cessation of nuclear testing in French Polynesia, and the relationship between the latter and France is perhaps best described as one of tentative reconciliation. The dependency must now rectify the social and economic problems left in the wake of *la bombe*, and navigate towards greater self-reliance. French Polynesia has evolved towards a considerable degree of self-government through a series of successive autonomy statutes, a progression that can largely be attributed to the work of local political stalwart and eternal proponent of the French presence in the Pacific, Gaston Flosse. Indeed, no analysis of French Polynesia would be complete without acknowledging the impact of Flosse on the Paris-Papeete relationship. A mercurial political figure with a hybrid mainland France/Polynesian identity, the *système Flosse* or 'Flosse system' will demonstrate the way that one man (with the consent of the Paris) has developed a self serving local political system that accounts for many of the dependency's stability dilemmas. As is also the case in New Caledonia, the ideological split between those who seek independence for French Polynesia and those who wish it to remain within the French Republic is a central feature of local political life. In particular, it will be shown how

Flosse has exploited this ideological divide both at home and in mainland France to his advance his own agenda: extensive territorial autonomy, massive financing from Paris, and incontestable political power.

The remarkable general elections of 2004 suggested that French Polynesia may be entering a new political era, with the old guard of Flosse's *Tahoera'a Huiraatira*⁸³ party being ousted by a coalition led by Oscar Temaru's *Tavini Huiraatira*⁸⁴, the pre-eminent pro-independence party of the dependency. However, this *taui* or 'change' in local politics was short-lived. Crippling strike action and destabilising tactics employed by Flosse's former intervention group the *GIP* wrought havoc in the dependency, and Temaru's fragile majority coalition eventually buckled under Flosse, the Autonomists, and French government-related pressures. The dubious involvement of France in this bitter power struggle suggests that political stability in French Polynesia is likely to remain fragile in the years to come.

It will finally be concluded that while France's cessation of the CEP in 1996 acted to stabilise French Polynesia, insofar as the controversial policy was withdrawn, the dependency continues to live in a post-nuclear shadow. On the one hand France is a willing partner in the post-CEP development process, acknowledging that it is permanently indebted to the local people for their contribution to the imperatives of the Republic. On the other hand, a host of resonant economic and social problems compound with a legitimate Independentist voice to form a situation that does not auger well for French Polynesia's future stability. In particular, France's reluctance to entertain the possibility of independence is an issue with the potential to quickly and aggressively divide the local population. If France is too often seen to be implicated in attempts to remove the democratically elected local government, there is a genuine risk of French Polynesia descending into a Loyalist-Independentist conflict scenario. Therefore, France's positive future contribution to French Polynesia's stability will depend on its co-operation in reducing the negative effects left in the wake of the CEP, and on its willingness to allow for political change, in particular the democratic expression of pro-independence sentiment at the local government level. The way

⁸³ See <http://tahoeraahuiraatira.pf/>

⁸⁴ See <http://www.tiamaraa.com/>

France approached Temaru and his government following the local elections of 2004 would suggest that it may be continuing to place a premium on national indivisibility at the expense of an unfettered democratic political process.

Key Points on the Historical Role of France in French Polynesian Conflict

Relative to New Caledonia, French Polynesia's social and ethnic landscape and historically more harmonious relationship with France make the stakeholders and motivations involved in conflict more difficult to define. Nevertheless, several points can be outlined regarding the general nature of conflict that has historically emerged in French Polynesia, and the role that France has played in such instability.

1. Instances of unrest or conflict in French Polynesia can for the most part be divided into four categories:

- a) Opposition to France's nuclear testing programme (CEP)
- b) Opposition to the social and economic conditions created by the CEP
- c) General opposition⁸⁵ to the French presence in French Polynesia
- d) A combination of a), b) and c).

2. Unlike New Caledonia, conflict in French Polynesia is not *bipolar*. Conflict in New Caledonia has for the most part emerged from the bipolar opposition or divide between Independentists and Loyalists. In French Polynesia however, the conflict dynamic is more complex, and the existence of Independentist sentiment is not in itself responsible for much of the conflict in the territory.

⁸⁵ While the first preparatory works on the CEP began in 1963, a latent opposition to the French presence in French Polynesia is noted by Jean-Marc Regnault to have existed in the territory long before its inception. In 1947, the *Ville D'Amiens* Affair marked the first important manifestation of Tahitian nationalism under the leadership of nationalist politician Pouvanaa a Oopa (Regnault 2005). Since this date a form of French Polynesian nationalism that generally opposes *direct* French rule has existed in one form or another in the territory. In 1977 however, such sentiment progressed into a co-ordinated political movement that overtly sought independence for French Polynesia with the creation of the *Front de Libération de la Polynésie* ('Polynesian Liberation Front'), known in the native Maohi language as *Tavini Huiraaatira* or 'Tavini'.

There are two key points which may account for this. The inter-ethnic *métissage* or creolisation that has taken place in French Polynesia ever since the early contact period means that the Loyalist-Independentist cleavage has not been able to develop so readily along ethnic lines as it has in New Caledonia⁸⁶. Henningham comments that “[a]part from hostility towards the Chinese community, and some suspicion of an antagonism towards Europeans, sharp political/cultural discontinuities and inter-communal conflicts have mostly been absent, at least so far. The contrast with New Caledonia is striking” (1992, 143). While the clear ethnic and social division between Kanaks and Caldoches in New Caledonia has catalysed an Independentist-Loyalist dichotomy, the *absence* of such a division in French Polynesia has prevented this *pro*- or *anti*- issue from becoming so predominant.

Also, the prevalence of Independentist sentiment in French Polynesia has been tempered by the existence of a more popular, less radical political movement: the *Autonomists*. While Autonomists may object to particular elements of French policy in French Polynesia – such as the CEP – they fall short of demanding outright independence. Instead, they seek an ever-increasing degree of autonomy and continued funding from the French government. The predominance of the Autonomists has thus channelled support away from the Independentists⁸⁷.

3. The principal security threats that French Polynesia has experienced have had some form of linkage with France’s nuclear testing programme from 1966 to 1996. This includes the Black October riots and fires of 1987, and the riots and damage at Papeete airport in 1995 that followed the decision to resume nuclear testing after a three-year suspension in the programme.

⁸⁶ Interview with Béatrice Vernaude, French Polynesian *Député* to the French National Assembly: Paris, February 2 2006.

⁸⁷ For key points on the interrelationship between the French Polynesian anti-nuclear movement, the Independentists and Autonomists see **Appendix #4: Anti-Nuclearism, Independentists and Autonomists in French Polynesia**.

4. Given the above three points, the principal actors involved in French Polynesian conflict are:

- a) A group of the French Polynesian population comprising at any one time
 - i) Those who seek independence from France; and/or
 - ii) Those who seek greater autonomy from France; and/or
 - iii) Those who oppose nuclear testing; and oppose the post-CEP social and economic landscape resulting from French policy;
- b) The French State, through the assertion of its national policy such as the CEP, defence, and law and order.

5. While in New Caledonia French policy varied considerably over the period of 1985 to 2006 and thus had a widely varying impact on security in the dependency, the policies of France have remained comparatively constant with regard to French Polynesia. This is accounted for by the fact that power changes in Paris never perturbed the nuclear testing programme, which was viewed as an imperative of the Republic. Furthermore, while France has demonstrated a degree of variability in its willingness to grant French Polynesia increasingly advanced autonomy statutes over the period of enquiry, it has nonetheless remained constant in its desire to retain ultimate sovereignty.

6. While the conviction of both the Independentists and Loyalists in French Polynesia may be strong, they have militated less against each other than their New Caledonian counterparts. Tensions exist between Independentists and Loyalists, but with regard to the *entirety* of conflict that has emerged in French Polynesia there has not been the same aggressive *polarisation* of two ideological factions over one particular issue.

The Impact of the Nuclear Testing

In view of the above key points, the impact of France on conflict and stability in French Polynesia can now be assessed for the time period of 1985 to 2006. The year 1985 finds French Polynesia some two thirds of the way through the period of nuclear testing. As such, the economic and social transformations that began at the time of the

CEP's inception had for the most part come to full fruition. Chesneaux and Maclellan describe the impact of the CEP on French Polynesia as a “‘big bang’, both from the suddenness of the shock and the amount of finances that were introduced into the territory”(1998, 116). The ‘nuclear economy’ will now be explored in order to illustrate those economic and social conditions resulting from the CEP that left the territory ripe for unrest and conflict.

Economic Transformation

The CEP brought a massive influx of staff, development and funding to French Polynesia, leading to “an unimaginable explosion in consumption, real estate transactions and financial flows” (Maclellan and Chesneaux, 1998, 116). While it has been noted that the CEP was not solely responsible for the decline in French Polynesia's formerly dependable exports of copra, vanilla and phosphate, it is nonetheless true that the influx of CEP funding meant that no realistic effort was made to revive these dwindling industries. The ‘new’ economy was to be founded on the huge injection of military funding and on the consumption provided by a booming population. In addition, France had channelled extra funds in order to encourage acquiescence to the programme (Henningham, 1992). The resultant economic effects were overwhelming: Maclellan and Chesneaux outline an official report from 1981 noting that the economy of the territory was “doped with artificial transfers of a colonial type, and characterised by the near-total importing of energy (99 per cent) and foodstuffs (84 per cent), the trade imbalance (deficit at 94.4 percent), an insufficiency of local production and the lack of vocational training” (1998, 117). Whereas the territory was thus able to maintain a reasonable balance of trade prior to the establishment of the CEP, it henceforth became heavily dependent on France for future prosperity.

Creation of a Privileged Middle Class

This rapid economic development had a strong destabilising effect on French Polynesian society. The substantially enlarged population and the progressive increase in public sector funding⁸⁸ gave rise to the emergence of a privileged and bloated bureaucracy. In 1962 before the arrival of the CEP, 3000 people were working in the public sector. By 1977 this figure had risen to 14000, and in 1983 it had reached

⁸⁸ Henningham notes that as the construction of the CEP neared completion, non-military public spending increased in order to compensate for the decline in military spending (1992).

23000, or 7.4% of the total population (De Vries and Seur, 1997). The numerous benefits and advantages attached with being a *fonctionnaire* or public servant in one of France's peripheries⁸⁹ acclimatised this large proportion of the local population to high living standards, establishing a powerful and affluent middle class. In addition, the absence of income taxes (due to the political motivation to further attract metropolitan French workers) drove up the cost of living in French Polynesia to an exceedingly high level, thereby marginalising the portion of the population whose income was not generated from public funds.

Creation of an Urban Working Poor

This privileged middle class can be contrasted with a simultaneous social phenomenon: the emergence of a population of urban working poor. In its construction phase the CEP provided extensive building and labouring opportunities for the local working population. French Polynesia's main island of Tahiti became a beacon to the inhabitants of its peripheral islands, with thousands of Polynesians being employed for short to mid-term periods to construct and service the testing programme (Danielsson, 1992, 181). As Finney notes, by 1967 well over half the territory's population lived in the greater Papeete urban area (1992, 260). The effect of this was two-fold. Firstly, the way of life in French Polynesia quickly mutated from one of traditional farming, cash crop production and fishing to one of CEP-generated wage labour, producing a rural exodus of the working populations in the outer islands towards the capital Papeete. The population thereby became severely imbalanced, in the form of a bustling and overcrowded centre, and dangerously underpopulated peripheries lacking the labour power to continue sustainable agricultural production. Secondly, the eventual completion of the CEP and the ephemeral nature of such work led to the emergence of a large unemployed population living in and around Papeete. While those laid off CEP workers were instructed to return to their traditional homes after their period of employment, the majority nonetheless opted to remain in decrepit *bidonvilles* (Finney, 1992, 262) or slums on the city's outskirts, having become accustomed to their new 'civilised' lifestyle (Danielsson, 1992, 181). Henningham comments that

⁸⁹ At the beginning of 1985, public servants received a supplement of 84% to the metropolitan base salary, a one million French Pacific Franc allowance for a distant posting, six months paid leave after three years of service, and free transport to and from mainland France on taking up and quitting duties and when on leave (Shineberg 1988).

[i]n the space of a single generation, the Polynesians were transformed from a 'peasantry' of self-employed farmers and fishermen into a primarily working-class population. By and large they seem to have gladly embraced the new order, despite the social problems it brought. They wanted to acquire consumer goods and preferred the 'fast money' they received every month from wage labour to the 'slow money' derived from harvesting and marketing traditional crops. Their response resembled that of some of their ancestors a century and a half earlier, who had shown great interest in the new goods and beliefs introduced through European contact, to the neglect of their own culture and traditions (1992, 131).

In turn, the uprooting of these unprivileged families from their extended family structures, the erosion of traditional values, and the idleness of unemployed youth in the modern urban environment created serious social problems. Various authors have referred to the emergence of delinquency and gangs, alcoholism, family abuse, criminality, and prostitution as examples of the CEP's impact on local society⁹⁰. A gaping socioeconomic disparity was thus created between those with and without French money in the 'nuclear' French Polynesia. By establishing the CEP without concern for the adverse effects that it would bring, France created a deracinated urban proletariat that bore daily witness to the opulence of the French lifestyle whilst being denied from ever accessing it.

The 1987 Black October Riots

It was this 'latent crisis' (Maclellan and Chesneaux, 1998, 121) that led to French Polynesia's first serious security threat of the CEP era⁹¹ in October 1987, in an event that French Polynesians now know as 'Black October'. The situation began with a dockers' strike which had been occupying the dock area for several weeks. On October 23, fifteen disgruntled workers who had just been laid off from the CEP arrived back at Papeete by plane. The protestations of these workers to their striking countrymen undoubtedly served to augment feelings of agitation and anti-French sentiment, and the untimely attempt by paramilitary police to break up the picket line set off a cataclysmic riot that eventually led to the declaration of a state of emergency. The strikers were supported in their battle against the police by a large group of unemployed young men from the suburbs around Papeete, and was outlined by a

⁹⁰ See Maclellan and Chesneaux 1988, Stephen Henningham 1992, Finney 1992.

⁹¹ For accounts of earlier instances of anti-France inspired tensions and violence, see Ben Finney, 'French Polynesia: A Nuclear Dependency' in Albert B. Robillard (Ed.), *Social Change in the Pacific Islands*, Kegan Paul International 1992.

Greenpeace report to have involved around 20,000 people (De Vries and Seur, 1997, 151). Overwhelming police efforts, the rioting quickly spread to Papeete's central business district, where a period of looting, burning and general chaos ensued. The disturbance was eventually subdued when the army was called in, and a curfew was imposed (Maclellan and Chesneaux, 1998, 154). Henningham estimates the total cost of the damage and losses sustained to be in the vicinity of several million Australian dollars (1992, 154).

It is true that the riots originated from a docker's strike, and not from anti-CEP sentiment as such. However, it is in the profoundness and rapidity of change to the social and economic landscape instilled by the CEP where responsibility for the Black October riots must ultimately lie:

The CEP's impact did not come from nowhere. The nuclear boom intensified and precipitated latent tendencies, that were already becoming apparent from the Second World War and which are evident in other South Pacific countries: urbanisation in the capital city; eagerness to join the waged workforce (which led Tahitian workers as far afield as the nickel works in New Caledonia); Polynesians' interest in modern technology and professional training; and the rise of an educated and wealthy class that moves in the world of both custom and capital. **But the arrival of the CEP was brutal, with little effort to control social changes that have been taking place at a much slower place in the rest of the Pacific** (Maclellan and Chesneaux, 1998, 120) [emphasis added].

France's CEP policy in French Polynesia was thus too narrowly conceived. Without having due regard for the potential adverse effects of such a swift and decisive transition to a 'nuclear economy', it destabilised the social landscape to the extent of provoking riots of a severity outlined above.

The September 1995 Riots

Whereas the Black October riots resulted from the systemic economic and social conditions created by the CEP, other instabilities have resulted more directly from local opposition to the nuclear programme itself. The riots that took place in September 1995 after French President Jacques Chirac declared that CEP testing was to be resumed are crucial for this analysis, as the way in which social and political groups mobilised themselves to oppose the resumption of the CEP bears testament to the undeniably strong impact of French policy on stability in French Polynesia.

After 187 French bombs had been detonated in the South Pacific, on April 8 1992 the then French Prime Minister Pierre Bérégovoy announced the decision of the President to impose a moratorium on the testing programme. However, on June 13 1995, just over three years after the moratorium, the recently elected French President Jacques Chirac decided to engage in a final series of nuclear tests at Moruroa. This announcement provoked feelings of outrage and disbelief from the local population, and French Polynesia quickly became engulfed in scenes of public opposition and protest of a vigour never before witnessed in the territory, accompanied by an unprecedented global media presence⁹². While a considerable degree of non-violent protest was organised by various political and church groups, such as the building of a 'peace village' in central Pape'ete or the organisation of a 'peace flotilla' to travel to Moruroa Atoll on June 29, it was the events that transpired on September 5 – the day after the first nuclear test – that took a more violent turn. The situation on the ground intensified in the first instance when a local union *A Tia I Mua* called for a general strike to begin midnight of the first day of nuclear testing. The following day, a demonstration assembling some 2000 people – including *A Tia I Mua* unionists and members from the pacifist women's group *Vahine To'a* – blocked Tahiti's airport runway, causing two international flights to be cancelled. French police riots squads were subsequently called to the scene, who pushed back the crowd using a combination of tear gas and force. Several fires were started in the clash, causing the airport terminal to be burned (Maclellan and Chesneaux, 1998).

The riot resulted in substantial damage to the airport and surrounding area, multiple injuries to police and protesters, a police raid on the union offices, and the jailing of union activists. In the immediate aftermath, the French government declared repeatedly that there was no link between the riots and the nuclear tests. The protesters were portrayed as being rebels without a cause or as merely a small minority of unemployed youths, militants and Independentists. Nevertheless, numerous commentators have argued that the riots were an expression of the social

⁹² See Peter de Vries and Han Seul, *Moruroa et Nous: expériences des Polynésiens au cours des 30 années d'essais nucléaires dans la Pacifique Sud*, Centre de Documentation et de Recherche sur la Paix et les Conflits 1997.

and economic inequalities that existed at the heart of French Polynesian society. President Gaston Flosse was accused of having allowed the riots to escape control by not ordering the gendarmerie – who were assembled close to the area of the disturbance – to intervene. Allowing the riots to escalate was posited to have been a political tactic by Flosse to discredit the local antinuclear and independence movements (De Vries and Seur, 1997, 159).

While such conflicting explanations exist as to the true cause of the clash, both the date of occurrence (the day after the first of the resumed nuclear tests) and the scale of the riot (around 2000 people) would suggest that it was neither a conflict initiated without due cause, nor the action of a small and insignificant minority. In 1987 the CEP had *indirectly* provoked riots through its subsidiary social and economic effects. With regard to the 1995 riots, however, the CEP was the *direct* and *primary* cause. Nonetheless, there was another dimension to the riots at Pape’ete airport. As outlined above, former Territorial President Gaston Flosse has made his own contribution to local disputes, and indeed it could be argued that no modern-day politician in the South Pacific has had a greater personal impact on conflict and political evolution in their homeland. A portrait of Gaston Flosse and his historical relationship with the French government is another important example of the way that France has impacted on stability in French Polynesia.

The Impact of Gaston Flosse on Local Stability

A fierce advocate of the French presence both in his homeland and in the wider region, an indefatigable battler for increased autonomy and financing from the mainland, and a close friend of French President Chirac, Flosse⁹³ is emblematic of both the modern power system in French Polynesia and its relationship with Paris. Heading the political party Tahoera’a Huiraatira (*‘Rassemblement du Peuple’* in French, ‘People’s Rally’), Flosse has come to dominate French Polynesia’s political life since 1982:

- Vice-President of the local government from 1982 to 1984;

⁹³ Born in 1931 in French Polynesia’s Gambier Islands, Flosse worked as a teacher before venturing into politics.

- President of the local government from 1984 to 1987, and significantly again from 1991 to 2004;
- Deputy in the French Republic's National Assembly from 1978 to 1982, then from 1993 to 1997;
- Deputy in the European Parliament from 1984 to 1986;
- Secretary of State for the South Pacific in the French government of Jacques Chirac from 1986 to 1988;
- Senator in the French Senate from 1998 (Regnault, 2005, 11).

It is not the intention however to provide a political biography of Flosse, who has already been the subject of substantial academic analysis⁹⁴. Rather the focus will be on the impact of Flosse – as an advocate of and a conduit for the policies of the French metropolitan government – on political and constitutional developments in French Polynesia between 1985 and 2006, and the resultant impact of these developments on local stability. It will be argued that Flosse's hybrid political personality as an intermediary between the French Polynesian electorate and the metropolitan government has seen French Polynesia evolve through a series of autonomy statutes, infirming Flosse's local dominance on the one hand, and manufacturing a local dependency on French funding on the other. In turn, this has allowed for the unopposed imposition of French policies. The combined effect of these concomitant phenomena is that fairness of the local political process has been compromised: France and Flosse have jointly used their control to suppress the emergence of pro-independence sentiment in the dependency, giving rise to political tension, protests and related violence.

The Elaboration of a System

Gaston Flosse has obtained a quasi-monopoly over the local political system through his ability to slip seamlessly between the political worlds of Paris and Papeete. In Paris, he presents himself as the lone voice in support of France and its policies in French Polynesia (the most important of which is the CEP), and France's only line of defence against the progression of the local independence movement. In Papeete, he presents himself simultaneously as a symbol of the wealth and prosperity that France can bring to the dependency, and as a tireless lobbyist for French Polynesia's

⁹⁴ For general reading see Jean-Marc Regnault, *Le Pouvoir Confisqué: L'affrontement Temaru-Flosse*, Les Indes Savantes 2005.

increased freedom from French regulation and control. As the deliverer of French assistance, he warns locals that not voting for the *Tahoera'a* will bring about independence, as well as a total severing of French Polynesia from its metropolitan umbilical cord.

Meanwhile, the discretionary control exercised by Flosse over a large proportion of funding from Paris has afforded him numerous benefits, including:

- the construction of extravagant and sumptuous civic buildings such as the Presidential Palace in Papeete and the 'gargantuan' mayor's office in Pirae (Regnault, 2005, 103), display-casing the extreme disparity of wealth in the territory;
- the ability to travel extensively throughout French Polynesia's widely dispersed islands for campaigning purposes, an ability that cannot be matched by his political adversaries due to the high cost involved;
- the large scale misappropriation of public funds, including the suspected existence of 'fictitious workers' on the territorial government payroll, and the manipulation of the private sector for political ends (Regnault, 2005, 108).

Moreover, the channelling of this money has allowed him to carve out a far-reaching network of patronage⁹⁵. While it is true that the privileged lifestyle in French Polynesia existed before Flosse's rise to power, his authority by virtue of office to allocate these privileges has increased and reinforced public acquiescence to his regime. The over-inflation of the public sector (noted as being one quarter of the entire working population) spawned a considerable body of public servants indebted to Flosse for the benefits they receive. The relationship between Flosse, French money, and the Polynesian Intervention Group (GIP) is particularly suspicious. Having since been disbanded by Temaru's government, Regnault notes that

the recruitment of the members of the GIP, made up of more than 600 people, is opaque. The service provide by these employees is often noticeable (maintenance of the town of Papeete, disaster relief, emergency works...) but often little compatible with labour law. These hundreds of people and their families, who

⁹⁵ For detailed accounts of Gaston Flosse's dubious economic and political influence in French Polynesia, read Nic Maclellan and Jean Chesneaux, *After Mororua: France in the South Pacific*, Ocean Press 1998; Regnault 2005.

owe everything to Gaston Flosse, make a considerable stock of votes for elections (2005, 108).

The relationship between Flosse and the GIP will be the subject of further elaboration later in this chapter.

While France has invariably supported Flosse in situations where its own control of the territory may be threatened, it has nonetheless become wary of Flosse's demands. As the councillors of former Minister for Overseas Departments and Territories Georges Lemoine observed,

The difficulties that oppose the government of the Republic with the government of the Territory stem from a dual will of Flosse:

1. *to have more autonomy, less regulation, even in international relations, otherwise stated an autonomy as close as possible to independence.*
2. *to make France pay as much as possible for the use of the CEP (France must repair "the damage"), otherwise stated a situation as close as possible to a rich patron.*

The will for power and the desire for monopoly explain a number of blockages and difficulties... (Lemoine, in Regnault, 2005, 97)

The vivacity of Flosse's pursuit of power has been noted by several commentators and former political acquaintances, who have qualified him as "autocratic" (Henningham, 1992, 153), as having a "frenzy for political power and business" (Regnault, 2005, 83), and as "wanting to install an authoritarian regime" (Regnault, 2005, 98). Former Vice President and Minister of Finance in Flosse's government, Patrick Peaucellier described him as a "megalomaniac" who "imposed his will as was done in the 17th and 18th Century, by behaving like an enlightened monarch" (Regnault, 2005, 99). In spite of such concerns however, the dominance by Flosse of the local political spectrum and his unwavering advocacy of the French presence in the dependency has seen France acquiesce to the majority of his demands, albeit with undertones of suspicion.

Flosse and Statutory Evolution

This acquiescence is especially evident in the domain of French Polynesia's statutory evolution. Since 1977 French Polynesia has had four different statuses in accordance

with the wishes of Flosse, three of which have come about since 1984⁹⁶ (Al Wardi and Regnault, 2005, 83). However, the latest status obtained in 2004 is undoubtedly that which best illustrates Flosse's own influence on the Paris-Papeete relationship, and most indicative of his desire to maintain his control over the territorial government. The new status conferred French Polynesia with the "high-sounding but ambiguous" (Chappell, 2005, 193) label of 'overseas country', and aroused considerable suspicion over the increased concentration of powers in Flosse's own office. The degree of autonomy granted by the status effectively protects the ruling class in French Polynesia against certain social laws applicable in metropolitan France, thereby cementing its power base.

In addition, the electoral rules were modified: the awarding of an electoral 'bonus' of one third of all seats to whichever party that won the majority in a district was theoretically supposed to create larger, more stable majorities to rule the dependency. However, the modern political landscape dictated that these 'bonuses' would only ever be won by Flosse's Tahoea'a party, thereby removing the check on power provided by a significant opposition⁹⁷. The fact that this provision was obtained without the consent of the French Polynesian people is particularly disquieting⁹⁸. The statute may thus be little more than a gentlemen's agreement between Chirac and Flosse to provide the latter with increased power and flexibility.

Perhaps the most overt example of the correlation between the Flosse system and instability is illustrated by the riots at Papeete airport in 1995. In allowing the situation to escalate by not ordering the *gendarmarie* to intervene, some analysts have

⁹⁶ Due to Flosse's request French Polynesia was granted a new status of 'internal autonomy' in September 1984, doting the territory with a modestly extended form of autonomy through greater budgetary powers, and control over those sectors of lesser importance to the interests of the Republic, such as education, labour, tourism, energy and the environment (Henningham 1992). More importantly, it placed the head of the majority party rather than the High Commissioner at the head of the executive effectively making Flosse the Territorial President of French Polynesia (MacIellan and Chesneaux 1998). This autonomy statute was further revised in 1990, and again in 1996 when the CEP was permanently suspended, granting more and more powers to the territory and to Flosse by reducing the control formerly upheld by the metropole. This was especially so in the domain of international relations (Saque 2002).

⁹⁷ For detail on this provision of the 2004 statute see Regnault 2005.

⁹⁸ As Regnault states, "with the status of 2004 (riddled with regrettable electoral provisions), not only was there no unanimity amongst the French political class, but there emerges the sentiment that it was a gift from majority to majority, even from man to man" (2005).

argued that Flosse wanted to discredit the Independentists by depicting them as architects of wanton destruction, while simultaneously reinforcing his position of negotiation *vis-à-vis* the French government. Flosse would claim before the Paris administration that the riots were the expression of an anti-French sentiment that could only be subdued through increased French funding (De Vries and Seur, 1997, 160).

For the above reasons, the Flosse system – with the acquiescence of the French government – has destabilised French Polynesia by creating an environment where social groups and political parties are systemically marginalised for a dual purpose: to maintain French control in the first instance, and maintain Flosse’s personal control in the second. Crucially, it is from these circumstances that a base of anti-Flosse, anti-France, and pro-independence sentiment has emerged, and in 2004 Flosse’s Tahoera’a was finally toppled by a coalition of Independentists and adversaries of his self-tailored system. However, Flosse’s determination for power is matched only by his determination to keep French Polynesia in the Republic, and thus the 2004 elections ushered in a new wave of conflict and instability in the dependency.

The 2004 Territorial Elections

Held some two years earlier than their regular scheduled date due to Flosse’s request that the territorial assembly be dissolved⁹⁹, the momentous territorial elections of 2004 were met with disbelief as the seats were counted. A coalition named *l’Union pour la Démocratie* (‘Union for Democracy’, UPLD), comprising several pro-independence parties and led by Oscar Temaru’s Tavini Huiraatira, eventually gained the allegiance of two pro-autonomy parties¹⁰⁰ in order to outnumber the Tahoera’a in local government by the slightest of margins. To the surprise of everyone, the Tahoera’a had been overthrown and Oscar Temaru was elected as the new Territorial President on June 14 2004.

⁹⁹ Flosse argued that the recent change to French Polynesia’s statute in 2004 made new elections appropriate, although it is likely that the request was motivated by the fact that the party of his French political ally, Jacques Chirac, had just suffered a crushing defeat to the Socialists in the March 2004 French regional elections.

¹⁰⁰ The *Fetia Api* party led by Philip Schyle and the *No Oe E Te Nunaa* party led by Nicole Bouteau gained one seat each in the Territorial Assembly.

The elections were significant for a multitude of reasons. First and foremost they revealed the evolving attitudes towards independence and Flosse's regime. The steady influx of CEP money ever since the 1960s and the gradual erosion of centralised French control had marginalised a considerable community of Polynesians who were unable to tap into the Flosse patronage system, giving strength to Oscar Temaru's Tavini (Chappell, 2005, 202). Meanwhile, since 2002 Temaru had developed an alliance with the Socialist Party in France that led him to adopt a more moderate stance on the polarising issue of independence. Independence remained the ideal scenario, but whereas once it was to be immediate, it would now be put off until local conditions were more favourable (Regnault, 2005, 140). However, why did the two small Autonomist parties align themselves with their ideological adversaries – the Independentists – in the vote for Territorial President? A general feeling had emerged that a moderate Independentist as Territorial President would be better than the perpetuation of the Flosse system (Regnault, 2005, 140).

Secondly, the elections revealed that Flosse's calculated political manoeuvre to cement control through the 2004 autonomy statute had backfired. The reform that gave a 'bonus' of seats was likely designed by Flosse to secure his party a large majority in the local assembly, even if his party's percentage of votes went down (Gonschor, 2005). However, this provision worked against him, as the important bonus offered in the populous Windward Islands was won instead by the UPLD.

Thirdly, the victory of the UPLD against the Tahoera'a revealed to what extent Flosse – with the complicity of the French administration – was prepared to tamper with the democratic process and destabilise French Polynesian society for the end of regaining power in the dependency. The May 23 elections ushered in a year-long period of tense political turmoil involving fierce party rallies, isolated instances of political violence,

and a considerable degree of involvement from the French State in the local democratic process¹⁰¹.

The by-election that finally resulted in February 2005 produced a mammoth voter turnout of nearly 80 percent. The coalition led by Oscar Temaru won a net victory with nearly 47 per cent of the vote, beating Gaston Flosse's list by more than 6000 votes cast, a much larger margin than that of the elections of May 23 2004¹⁰². Overseas Minister Girardin's predecessor Christian Paul said the election results expressed "a massive and yet calm refusal of a system that was eating French Polynesia like a cancer. The universal suffrage has indicated without any ambiguity the direction to take, and that is change" (Decloitre, 2005a). Temaru's UPLD again won the electoral bonus of 13 seats, but had failed to break the political deadlock: the UPLD and the Tahoera'a were now even, with 27 seats each in the territorial assembly. The three-seat balance of power became occupied by the newly-created *Alliance for a New Democracy* (ADN), a pro-autonomy alliance led by Nicole Bouteau that opposed siding with either Flosse or Temaru. Nonetheless, the point on which the UPLD and the ADN agreed was that Flosse's time had come, and on February 18 they successfully voted in a motion of no confidence that toppled his government. Oscar Temaru was thus again elected as Territorial President of French Polynesia on March 3 2005¹⁰³.

Recent Political Instability

However, much has happened since Temaru's accession to Territorial President in 2005 to suggest that political situation remains highly volatile. Flosse's conduct has revealed him to be less than gracious in defeat, and though he no longer occupies the top position in the local political system, aspects of the Flosse *system* remain intact.

¹⁰¹ For a detailed account of the events between the May 23 2004 territorial elections and the lead-up to the subsequent by-election of February 13 2006, see *Appendix #5: France, Flosse and Temaru: Political Destabilisation in French Polynesia resulting from the Territorial Elections of May 2004*.

¹⁰² The UPLD won the popular votes in the city of Pape'ete, the island of Moorea, the tiny island of Maiao next to Moorea, and three communes on the island of Tahiti, all of which Flosse's party won on May 23 (Tahitipresse, 2005c).

¹⁰³ His bid was unchallenged by Flosse, as the Tahoera'a instead nominated Gaston Tong Sang, Flosse's heir apparent, as their Presidential candidate.

In the first instance, Flosse did not stay true to his word and resign after losing the by-election, prompting one of his ministers to resign in disappointment (Decloitre, 2005). Later, the election for President was delayed by Flosse's repeated boycotting of the vote (Tahitipresse, 2005a). After Temaru's presidency was assured, calls came from within Flosse's party to file another censure motion within the year (Tahitipresse, 2005e). Finally, before leaving the presidential grounds, Flosse employed a 'scorched-earth' tactic by allegedly shredding and burning the bulk of the records kept by his administration (Gonschor, 2006, 134). These tactics meant that Temaru and his newly-appointed government were confronted with a difficult operating environment from the outset.

The GIP

The area where the Temaru government encountered the most difficulty was in its dealings with the infamous Polynesian Intervention Group (GIP)¹⁰⁴, eventually having a severe impact on stability in the territory. Problems emerged initially when it moved to clean up the GIP by replacing the head of the Group, Léonard Puputauki, with its own nominee. An epic standoff thus began between the Temaru government – attempting to increase the transparency of the bloated taskforce by restructuring and downsizing – and a hardcore group of some 300 members within the GIP.

The dissidents blocked the port of Papeete for four days in late March 2005, (RNZI, 2005b), intercepted and boarded one of the Group's ships while at sea (Oceania_Flash, 2005), erected road blockades and another port blockade in April during the visit of a New Zealand government delegation (The_New_Zealand_Herald,

¹⁰⁴ The GIP was established by Flosse in the second half of the 1990s as a disaster relief team for French Polynesia's dispersed islands and neighbouring states. To this end the Group has had at its disposal a fleet of ships and a range of heavy machinery. Since the 1990s the Group's functions have expanded to include various construction and public works initiatives, with a work force of some 1,300 people. At all times however an overriding mandate has either been non-existent or loosely-defined. The Group's recruitment process is opaque, and its activities have been linked to many nefarious events occurring over the course of Flosse's regime. For example, the Group is alleged to include a so-called 'intelligence unit' that was implicated in the disappearance of Jean-Pascal Couraud in 1997, a local journalist and outspoken critic of Flosse and his government (RNZI 2005). Oral evidence was submitted in 2004 by the son of one of the GIP's former members that Couraud had been "physically eliminated" (Decloitre 2005). Indeed, *Reporters Sans Frontières* reported that former GIP member Vetea Guilloux claimed to have witnessed Couraud's abduction, torture and drowning under the orders of Gaston Flosse (RNZI 2005). Guilloux was however convicted for lying about the event, and nothing eventuated from the case. The disappearance in 2002 of Boris Léontieff in the Tuamotu archipelago – the then opposition leader to the Flosse government – also remains unexplained (Gonschor 2006). It should not be surprising therefore that the GIP has come to be understood locally as a form of private militia and security force for Flosse.

2005), and again blockaded the port in August over a contract-related dispute (RNZI, 2005c). This incessant series of blockades had a profound impact on French Polynesian society, perturbing inter-island and international shipping operations, as well as preventing access to the dependency's storage tanks for gasoline, diesel and jet fuel (Tahitipresse, 2005f). In the face of such unrest the Temaru government finally succeeded in permanently dissolving the GIP unit in January 2006, transferring all GIP staff to the Ministry of Public Works (Tahitipresse, 2006m). However, the dissidents responded unsurprisingly with yet another port blockade, joined on this occasion by trade unions of commercial fishermen and fish merchants who were unhappy with work conditions¹⁰⁵. By this time the patience of the French Polynesian people was wearing perilously thin: a group of Papeete business leaders staged a procession of delivery trucks through the urban centre in protest over the repeated disturbances, and threatened to lay off workers for economic reasons (Tahitipresse, 2006f). The Temaru government submitted a request to a Papeete Court that the striking employees be expelled from the port area, but before the Court could rule the strike leader and former GIP chief Léonard Puputauki ordered the three-day blockade to be lifted (Tahitipresse, 2006l).

The role of France in French Polynesia's Recent Political Instability

Conspicuously absent from the GIP-instigated strikes and blockades was any form of intervention from the French State, which is solely responsible for maintaining public law and order in French Polynesia. From the outset the Temaru government condemned what it deemed to be deliberate inaction and negligence on the part of France. Indeed, requests from the Temaru government that France guarantee access to the port were ignored: French Minister for Overseas Brigitte Girardin's position was that the confrontation was an internal and "administrative" matter, and therefore did not justify French government intervention (Decloitre, 2005b). The French government had also argued that a negotiated settlement would be preferable to a confrontation between police and strikers (Tahitipresse, 2006i). The counter argument however has been that the extent of the damage that the blockades had had on French Polynesia's economy should have warranted a police intervention (Decloitre, 2005c).

¹⁰⁵ The protesters symbolically dumped a truck load of rotten fish in front of the entrance to the French Polynesian government's presidential offices on June 14 and in front of the Territorial Assembly the following day, and used their vessels to block cargo ships from entering the port (Tahitipresse 2006).

The decision by the French State to not intervene was thus suspected to be a political strategy to weaken the Temaru government. Assembly member Sabrina Birk stated that by not intervening, the French State and its embodiment in French Polynesia – the High Commissioner – were effectively allowing the security situation to degenerate (RNZI, 2005b). After the June 2006 strike President Temaru issued a communiqué criticising “the serious and inadmissible deficiencies of the State in French Polynesia”, stating of the strike that “[d]espite its police force of gendarmes and the squadron of security gendarmes permanently based in Faa’a (the commune adjacent to Papeete), the State gave no indication of its presence, encouraging others outside of the law to reinforce the blockade” (Tahitipresse, 2006l).

These port-related disturbances evolved into further strikes late into 2006, and as tensions reached a crescendo the French government was eventually compelled – perhaps reluctantly – to authorise a police intervention. A general strike that began on October 13¹⁰⁶ led to roadblocks being quickly replaced on October 22 by a storming of the territory’s top government buildings: the presidency, the French Polynesia Assembly, the Economic, Social and Cultural Council, and the vice presidency. Anti-government demonstrations were staged from the newly-erected blockades within the grounds of the four facilities. Temaru was in Fiji at the time attending the 37th Pacific Islands Forum Leaders’ summit, and it was demanded in his absence that the Territorial Assembly be dissolved and that new elections be held. As local paper *Tahitipresse* commented, “[t]he political agenda that was only partially hidden when the first Papeete roadblocks went up on October 12 as part of a general strike and an anti-Temaru government protest has thus surfaced in plain sight.” It is perhaps not

¹⁰⁶ The strike was in protest against the high cost of living in French Polynesia, and is likely to have been staged as a follow-on to the port blockades that had ended in mid-September. Crippling Tahiti’s infrastructure by placing buses across the main access roads into Papeete, the general strike on this occasion was called by the *O Oe To Oe Rima* Union, but quickly gained the support of the disgruntled faction within the disbanded GIP. A stand-off between the Temaru government and France ensued: the new High Commissioner Anne Boquet took the traditional mediative approach to the conflict through the facilitation of dialogue, but the Temaru government refused to negotiate until all roadblocks were removed. The local business community expressed its concern to the French State that Papeete may relive the “events” of 1987 and 1995, when the capital was burnt and partly destroyed (Tahitipresse 2006f).

coincidental that this GIP action coincided to the day with Gaston Flosse's brief return to power on October 22 2004 (Oceania_Flash, 2006f).

Around one hundred French riot police finally stepped in to remove the protesters from the four buildings: thirty tear gas grenades were used to liberate the Assembly, but there were no reported injuries to demonstrators, and no arrests were made (Tahitipresse, 2006h). Temaru called the occupation an "attempted coup" and blamed High Commissioner Boquet for the situation: "[r]ather than acting to free the public highways that have been blocked for ten days, the French High Commissioner has chosen courteously to receive Flosse's boys who are leading the barricades and occupations" (Magick, 2006).

The Toppling of Temaru

This sustained period of instability eventually took its toll on the Temaru government: it was finally toppled (for the second time in two years) on December 13 2006 by a censure motion orchestrated by Gaston Tong Sang, the Mayor of Bora Bora, and Gaston Flosse's heir apparent within the Tahoera'a (Tahitipresse, 2006q). Political bickering and heavy horse-trading ensued yet again, as both the UPLD and the Tahoera'a fought to shore up the necessary support to snatch (or *regain* in the case of Temaru) the presidency (Decloitre, 2006b). On December 26 however it was Gaston Tong Sang who was this time elected President, defeating Temaru by a vote of 31-26 in the Assembly. Temaru described Tong Sang's victory as the "legalised theft of our territory" (Tahitipresse, 2006n), and the early months of 2007 were marked by a tit-for-tat censure motion lodged by Temaru, as well as a Temaru-led march through Papeete, calling for the resignation of Tong Sang and fresh general elections¹⁰⁷.

This result was in part due to Temaru's outspoken advocacy of future independence for French Polynesia. It must be recalled that Temaru's Tavini needed to form a coalition with some small pro-autonomy parties in order to overcome the Tahoera'a in the elections, and that independence was thus not desired by everyone in his

¹⁰⁷ See **Appendix #8: Postscript: the Ousting of the Temaru government and the reinstatement of the Tahoera'a in French Polynesia.**

government. The way Temaru employed his position as President to promote discussion about independence therefore outraged not only opposition members, but also certain members within his own coalition, some of whom becoming sufficiently vexed to resign. The pro-autonomy Minister of Post and Telecommunications Emile Vernaudon resigned on April 11 2006, stating in his letter to Temaru that "...since your taking office at the head of the land, you haven't stopped calling loud and strong during each official voyage to a foreign country for a path of independence, even though you are representing us as president of French Polynesia" (Tahitipresse, 2006j).

However, this latest ousting of Temaru also needs to be contextualised by the instabilities described above following his victory in March 2005. Over the time period spanning March 2005 to October 2006 there were at least six serious conflict situations that broke out in French Polynesia, all in the form of strikes and demonstrations that sought to disrupt daily life through the imposition of blockades at strategic points in the dependency's infrastructure. On each of these occasions responsibility for the strikes and blockades fell either in large part or in full upon a group within the GIP, headed at all times by Léonard Puputauki, former GIP boss and known associate of Gaston Flosse. In spite of the inestimable losses in revenue caused by these disturbances and in spite of the repeated requests by the Temaru government for action, the French State only finally mobilised security forces once local government buildings were stormed.

Why did the French state wait for the situation to degenerate to this extent before assuming its sovereign responsibility to uphold order and the rule of law? The High Commissioner Boquet justifying her inaction on the basis that "when you use law enforcement methods, you are actually entering into new tensions that can lead to a spiral of violence and this is not necessarily an efficient way of solving the issue in the long-term" (Oceania_Flash, 2006h). To the credit of Boquet and the French government the potential for the tensions to result in violence was indeed averted, and the only police intervention passed without incident. However the question can be legitimately posed: if the local security forces are not to be used against French

Polynesians involved in actions that have been declared illegal, then against whom are they to be used?

The GIP's involvement in all six of the conflict situations, and the way it culminated in overtly anti-government action, make it difficult to argue that the demonstrations were not part of a larger political tactic to destabilise, discredit and embarrass the Temaru government. The fact that Gaston Flosse has historically been so closely linked to the GIP makes it similarly difficult to argue that he was not passively complicit – if not actively involved – in the affair¹⁰⁸. The crucial question is therefore as follows: by waiting so long before ordering security forces to intervene, was the French State demonstrating its complicity in efforts to destabilise the Temaru government by wilfully leaving the security situation in French Polynesia to deteriorate? The answer is perhaps best approached when one considers the strength of the Chirac-Flosse relationship, the previous destabilising actions of Minister for Overseas Brigitte Girardin at the time of the 2004 territorial elections, and the collective desire of both the French government and Flosse to keep independence off the agenda in French Polynesia. At the very least, it is concerning that the French government repeatedly ignored Temaru's requests for the systematic blockades to be cleared.

France and French Polynesia into the post-CEP future

In light of this recent churn in the political landscape, the future remains highly uncertain for French Polynesia. The autonomy-independence confrontation, lingering questions from the CEP era, and territorial development are issues that continue to define French Polynesia's existence.

The Flosse, Temaru and France: a Chapter Closed?

At the level of local politics, tensions have eased since the return to power of the Autonomists in December 2006. The Paris-Papeete relationship has found a more even keel, as pro-France Territorial President Tong Sang works to smooth the ruffled

¹⁰⁸ French Polynesian Vice-President Jaqui Drollet stated after the government buildings were liberated that “what [the demonstrators] were trying to do was to give the impression that the local institutions could not function normally, which would have given rise to dissolving the local Assembly and calling snap elections” (Oceania Flash 2006).

feathers caused by Temaru during his brief period in power (Tahitipresse, 2007). Not surprisingly, little has been reported of the GIP since the Tahoera'a was reinstated, and yet in spite of this seemingly ubiquitous influence of Flosse, recent events would suggest that his time in local¹⁰⁹ politics may soon be at an end. In November 2005 French police searched the premises of Flosse's Tahoera'a offices as part of two separate inquiries: one in relation to the disappearance of the journalist Jean-Pascal Couraud in 1997; one in connection with a fraud probe over the Flosse government's purchase of an atoll (RNZI, 2005a). Later that month, a Paris hotel owned by Flosse was seized on the orders of a Papeete Tribunal in order to repay a debt of around US \$1,000,000, which he owed to a Vanuatu-based International Trust company (RNZI, 2006a). In June 2006 he was given a suspended three-month jail sentence for corruption, with Tahiti's criminal court finding him guilty of abusing his political office in relation to his purchase of the now seized hotel (RNZI, 2006b). Such events possibly explain his announcement in November 2006 that he would be prepared to step aside in favour of his prodigé Gaston Tong Sang (2006a).

The Continuing Nuclear Shadow

While Temaru is no longer at the head of the local government, the Paris-Papeete relationship nonetheless continues to be strained to an extent by the local bitterness and sense of injustice that remains from the nuclear testing era. Oscar Temaru's years as an anti-nuclear activist have informed his stance on independence; his approach to politics is therefore inextricably linked with his desire that France acknowledge and remedy the 'damage'¹¹⁰ it has caused French Polynesians.

In early February 2006 – amidst a furious propaganda war between France and the Temaru government – the local Assembly approved a report finding that the French military's so-called 'clean' nuclear tests turned out to produce environmental and public health consequences that began with the first atmospheric test in July 1966¹¹¹ (Tahitipresse, 2006c). The unveiling of the controversial report coincided with the French Defence Minister appointing a special envoy to travel to French Polynesia in

¹⁰⁹ Let it be recalled that Flosse is also a Senator in the French National Senate.

¹¹⁰ Local opponents of France have consistently blamed nuclear tests for the region's chronic levels of leukaemia and other cancers, and believe that for years France has orchestrated an elaborate cover-up.

¹¹¹ The report, headed by a top-ranking member of Temaru's Tavini party, drew the swift response from the High Commissioner's Office that the nuclear tests were conducted with a "permanent concern" for protecting people, and that "[t]he state has always expressed its willingness for dialog and transparency to avoid any unfounded allegation" (Tahitipresse 2006).

order to initiate dialogue over the hotly-disputed issue (Tahitipresse, 2006b). The visit was a failure: during the delegate's time in the dependency the Temaru government decided to mark the "sad anniversary" of the first French atmospheric nuclear test by holding several demonstrations across Tahiti (Tahitipresse, 2006e). Moreover, the government boycotted a French State-organised visit to Moruroa on the basis that the information provided by the delegate pertaining to the tests was "unsatisfactory" (Tahitipresse, 2006p).

The French government maintains that it has "nothing to fear from transparency" on the nuclear tests issue (Oceania_Flash, 2006c). Oscar Temaru is no longer President, but he continues to spearhead a campaign against what he believes to be a French effort to conceal the military data proving that the CEP has claimed the lives of countless French Polynesians. A degree of latent tension between Paris and Papeete is thus likely to remain for as long as there is a popular feeling among the French Polynesian people that France has brazenly exploited them.

Development Issues

Future French Polynesian security will also depend in large part upon the way the French government deals with the dependency's many remaining development problems¹¹². The end of the CEP was welcomed for a multitude of reasons, but feared in the sense that French Polynesia's prosperity was no longer assured by a money-trail from Paris.

In compensation for the 'service' that French Polynesia has performed for the Republic, a succession of framework agreements have mapped out the degree and scope of French funding that the dependency will receive in the post-CEP era¹¹³. The overall progress made towards reducing French Polynesia's economic dependence

¹¹² For useful reading see Gilles Blanchet, 'What Development after the CEP? French Polynesia in Search of a New Style' in Christian Jost (Ed.), *The French-Speaking Pacific: Population, Environment and Development Issues*, Boombana 1998.

¹¹³ The first Pact of Progress was developed in 1992 after the nuclear testing moratorium. This pact was concretised in 1994 with the French National Assembly and Senate's passing of the *Loi D'Orientation*, a ten-year agreement for French Polynesia's economic and social development and rebalancing. This was strengthened in July 1996 at the end of nuclear testing with the Agreement for the Strengthening of French Polynesia's Economic Autonomy (25 July 1996).

however has been found to be modest. A report published in 1996 by the French Senate noted that French Polynesia was characterised by:

- An accumulation of handicaps including the scattered nature of the territory's many islands, geographic isolation, and a young and unpredictable demographic landscape;
- An economy resting on (French) transfers, resulting in a situation of strong dependence, a lack of business competition, and worrying repercussions on French Polynesian society including a "rural exodus;"
- A centralised organisation of the territory contrasting with the isolation of the archipelagos and paralysis of the communes (Sénat, 1996).

Therefore, development assistance was bolstered at the end of the nuclear testing programme in July 1996 by the Agreement for the Strengthening of French Polynesia's Economic Autonomy, locally known under the French acronym 'DGDE'. Under the DGDE, France agreed to replace CEP-related income by paying 18 billion CFP French Pacific francs to the territory for ten years (some US \$200 million per annum) (Maclellan and Chesneaux, 1998). Since this time France has agreed to maintain the funding provided by the DGDE indefinitely (DFAT, 2006).

The second development contract for the Pact of Progress was concluded for the period of 2000-2003, and was then extended to 2006, in order to compensate for the earlier 1992-1995 testing moratorium (MFAT, 2006). This support once again focused on the dependency's economy, infrastructure, cultural and social unity, and development of the outermost islands (SPC, 2001). However, in spite of clear progress made in key areas, the same latent development problems from the CEP era appear to remain in the new millennium. A report published in 2002¹¹⁴ reiterated the existence of a heavily dependent 'economy of rent' that has provoked inflation and a serious balance of trade deficit, a protectionist fiscal system disadvantaging the lower

¹¹⁴ See Bernard Poirine, 'L'économie de « l'après-CEP » : forces et faiblesses' in *Hermès*, 32-33, 2002.

income bracket of society, an artificially high cost of living, a still inflated public sector, and difficulties associated with the tourism industry¹¹⁵.

In addition, the local political landscape since the inception of such development agreements has dramatically evolved. French Polynesia has at times appeared to have become the new *enfant terrible* of the French Pacific. Temaru's defiant approach to the issue of independence for example made Autonomists fear that the same degree of funding would not be upheld – a fear that was grandstanded regularly by Gaston Flosse. In October 2005 the freshly ousted Flosse urged President Chirac to maintain France's financial assistance for the territory, "even though the French Polynesian government expresses only little interest in its relations with France." President Chirac reminded Flosse that the French State was facing budgetary difficulties, and a Tahoera'a party communiqué thus concluded that Chirac could not categorically affirm that the present financing agreement would be renewed in 2006 (Tahitipresse, 2005b).

In January 2006, the Temaru government announced its proposal for a five-year development contract that would focus primarily on economic development, especially in the tourism sector. French Polynesia's Vice-President Drollet also noted Jacques Chirac's declaration in 2003 that the DGDE of 18 billion French Pacific francs per year (approximately 150 million euros) was permanent, and that it was thus the local government's intention to hold him to his word (Tahitipresse, 2006d). The agreement that finally resulted between Papeete and Paris was that the DGDE would remain, but that the amount of the grant used to finance the government's administrative expenditures was to be reduced to a maximum of 35% in the 2006 budget (down from 50% when Flosse was President), a maximum of 30% in 2007, and to 20% from 2008 onward (Tahitipresse, 2006g).

The contradiction inherent in remedying French Polynesia's development problems is that all initiatives are dependent for the time being on French funding, while the

¹¹⁵ Tourism is generally regarded by local politicians, including the Temaru government, as the most likely way French Polynesia could become economically self-reliant. As numerous authors have noted however, the high cost of living imposed by direct taxes on consumption makes Tahiti a particularly expensive tourist destination, handicapping its ability to be competitive in the global tourism market.

amount of French funding to be received logically depends on an agreeable relationship between Paris and Papeete. As Blanchet sagely noted in 1998, “[h]e who pays, controls” (1998, 228). On the other hand, France’s granting of past funding agreements, the extended autonomy provided by the status of 2004, and the sense of debt owed to French Polynesia has undoubtedly generated a reasonable expectation among locals that France remains committed to the development process. Following on from this, should France conspicuously attempt to “turn off the taps,” as was suggested by former Overseas Minister Brigitte Girardin in 2005 (Regnault, 2005, 76), the marginalised segments within French Polynesian society could again mobilise themselves (as they did previously in 1987 and 1995) against the State. France is already suspected at the grassroots level to have been implicated in returning the pro-France Autonomists to power. A second act of destabilisation– through the reduction of financing – could potentially be the straw that breaks the camel’s back in an already unsettled territory.

What Future Status for French Polynesia?

At the least, French Polynesia will remain a non-sovereign dependency of France in the short to mid-term,. This is for several reasons. The first is that France wishes for it to remain French, and possesses all the tools available to ensure that this remains the case. These tools include:

- The sovereign control of justice, law and order, defence, international relations and currency;
- The final say over whether French Polynesia economically develops itself to a point where self-determination is possible;
- The proven ability to penetrate the local political system to protect its own interests.

Secondly, pro-independence sentiment is not prevalent enough in French Polynesia to decisively outweigh the combined will of the French metropolitan government and the local pro-France population. In comparison with New Caledonia, the emergence of consolidated Independentist sentiment is a relatively new phenomenon in French Polynesia, where – in spite of the CEP – ethnic intermixing and the many privileges bestowed by the motherland mean that pro-France feelings run deep. The pro-France

voting bloc in French Polynesia continues to command a majority throughout the dependency, and pro-independence sentiment at the political level is rejected by Autonomists on the basis that it is not the view of *most* French Polynesians.

Thirdly, the economic and social development processes in place in French Polynesia have not yet made sufficient progress (and indeed it is conceivable that they may never make sufficient progress) to make independence from France a realistic option in the short to mid-term. French Polynesia's territorial budget is still heavily subsidised by direct French transfers, while key local industries have not yet proved themselves capable of taking up the slack left by a potential French withdrawal.

The Tahiti Nui Agreements

While New Caledonia's status provides for a vote on self-determination potentially leading to independence, French Polynesia's current arrangement does not. Oscar Temaru wants to obtain this important referendum for French Polynesia and is aware of the positive effect that the Matignon and Noumea Accords have had on New Caledonia's evolution. During his time as Territorial President he proposed to the French government that an agreement similar to the Matignon Accords be created for French Polynesia: the 'Tahiti Nui Agreements'. In late March 2006 Temaru presented his proposal to the then French Overseas Minister François Baroin¹¹⁶, explaining that the purpose of the Tahiti Nui agreements would be to give French Polynesia a "very precise institutional framework", and "a better view of the future", while recognising Tahiti's French colonial past¹¹⁷ (Tahitipresse, 2006k). Baroin responded that the proposal was the business of the French Polynesian people, and that if there was a consensus for the proposal then Paris would agree to discuss it (Tahitipresse, 2006k). The French government is aware of the fact that the Independentists in French Polynesia must firstly overcome the hurdle or 'line of defence' posed by the Autonomists before they can demand independence from the Republic. Therefore, until a consensus is achieved among the French Polynesian people for such a proposal, a vote on self-determination will be kept off the agenda.

¹¹⁶ In March 27 2007 Baroin was replaced by Hervé Mariton as Minister for Overseas; Baroin has since become the Minister of Foreign Affairs.

¹¹⁷ Mindful of the fact that the majority of French Polynesians presently favour continued ties with France, Temaru's proposal semantically tiptoed around the issue of independence by not *overtly* demanding a vote on self-determination, declaring instead the will of French Polynesians to express themselves on the question of full sovereignty "when the time comes" (Tahitipresse 2006).

Independence in Association?

Where once Temaru demanded a full and immediate accession to independence for French Polynesia, he then came to regard it as an ideal for a more favourable time in the future (Regnault, 2005, 140). More recently he moderated his stance even further, claiming that “a country’s sovereignty does not mean severing ties with France... one can negotiate cooperation agreements” (Oceania_Flash, 2006i). Temaru therefore declared his preference to see French Polynesia come to an ‘independence in free association with France’ arrangement, a solution that has often been discussed in relation to France’s Pacific territories in the past¹¹⁸.

The Temaru camp argues that an independence-in-association agreement is desirable because it would allow the dependency to accede to full sovereignty but retain a degree of France’s financial assistance. It would also preserve the close cultural ties it has forged with France. The sovereignty obtained would allow the French Polynesian State to fully integrate in its regional environment (through its ability to conduct international relations and enjoy full membership in regional organisations such as the Pacific Island Forum), while the associative aspect would still provide a role for France in both the new-formed state and in the wider region. Temaru has referred in particular to the Cooks Islands’ ‘free association’ status with New Zealand as an example of an arrangement that could be used for French Polynesia in relation to France (Tahitipresse, 2006o). The Autonomists on the other hand counter that the independence-in-association solution is overly idealistic, as France would not be willing to sustain a long-term funding programme in the event of French Polynesia’s sovereignty. In such a case French Polynesia would likely collapse under the weight of financial hardship, and could risk the same fate as many other newly-formed states in the region, as per the ‘failed state’ paradigm. In any event, the Autonomists would claim, no solution involving independence is an option because the majority of French Polynesians wish to remain a part of France.

¹¹⁸ See Stephen Henningham, ‘New Caledonia and French Polynesia - Towards Independence-in-Association?’ in Robert Aldrich (Ed.), *France, Oceania and Australia : Past and Present*, University of Sydney 1991; Paul de Deckker, ‘The Perception of France in the Pacific Islands’ in Robert Aldrich (Ed.) 1991.

Is an independent French Polynesia in association with France a plausible option for the dependency's future? At every turn, Temaru's attempts to argue for his territory's self-determination under the principals of the UN charter have been rejected by France on the basis that self-determination is possible under the French Constitution. France thus removes the debate from the international realm and represents self-determination as an internal matter. After Temaru lobbied at the 2006 Pacific Islands Forum to have French Polynesia re-enlisted on the United Nations' list of non-self governing territories, a French official summed up his government's approach by stating that "since French Polynesia's institutions do allow the exercise to the right to self-determination, it basically means that there is no need to appeal for external support... this issue is rather an internal matter for French Polynesia...at the end of the day, Mr Temaru has to convince French Polynesia's population of the value of his beliefs" (Oceania_Flash, 2006b).

In the final analysis, underpinning any discourse surrounding French Polynesia's future independence is what appears to be a strong and unshakeable refusal on the part of the French State to entertain any suggestion that it may one day cede sovereignty to French Polynesia. Forms of autonomy and self-government can be extended and reworked, but sovereignty is where the buck stops; it is the jewel in the Republic's crown that the metropolitan government has no intention of handing over. As De Deckker observes, "...it must be said that the State tolerates very badly the sight of some of its previous powers and prerogatives escaping it" (1991, 182).

The independence-in-association option would appear to be a worthwhile compromise between all actors involved. It satisfies the Independentists' desire for sovereignty, the Autonomists' desire for continued financial security, the French State's desire to retain influence, and the collective desire of all three parties not to provoke a total split between two lands with such close cultural links. However, for the reasons described above this solution appears unlikely. France can afford to undermine discussion of self-determination at the present time because pro-independence sentiment in French Polynesia is currently confined to a minority of the local population. However, it remains to be seen if France will continue to assert this doctrine should the Independentists ever come to represent a majority. Even at the present moment the situation in French Polynesia is fragile.

With Oscar Temaru only having been recently voted out of the local presidency, there is at all times a latent potential for conflict to erupt from the refusal to acknowledge an Independentist voice in French Polynesia. Ultimately the dependency's future will consist of a gradual drifting either toward or away from France, but in the meantime France could better contribute to French Polynesian stability by demonstrating its willingness to consider both possible outcomes.

Chapter Conclusion

Over the course of French Polynesia's evolution from 1985 to 2006, French influence has at all times been a central determining factor in local stability. For the first half of this time period this was principally illustrated through the implantation of the nuclear testing programme, and until 1996 the CEP has been shown to have destabilised French Polynesia on two different levels. Firstly, it intensified the smouldering resentment toward France and the French presence that had lingered from the colonial era, and established a bipolar cleavage in French Polynesian society between pro-France and anti-France sympathisers. Secondly, the CEP-generated changes to French Polynesia's landscape created a 'nuclear economy' characterised by the marginalisation of communities, the demise of the traditional lifestyle, and the emergence of a political system based on French money and patronage. It was these two concomitant phenomena that led to the outbreak of riots in 1987 and 1995: the Black October riots revealing the frustration and disillusionment of those who were excluded from the new-found prosperity; the 1995 riots illustrating the strength of the anti-France and antinuclear sentiment that had accumulated in the CEP environment.

Furthermore, although the CEP was disestablished in 1996 it has been shown that the systemic dilemmas it produced are continuing to destabilise French Polynesia in the present day. An artificially high cost of living, a large disparity of wealth, and the social issues posed by a now long-established social class of 'have-nots' are problems that continue to blight French Polynesia in the post-CEP era. In particular, the heavily dependent French Polynesian economy (facilitated through the political hegemony of Gaston Flosse) is a structure that will require a Herculean effort to overhaul.

But if France's contribution to stability through the CEP can be described as one of 'damage,' it must be duly acknowledged that in the aftermath it is now one of 'reconstruction.' France is committed to the redevelopment process, and acknowledges the debt it owes to the people of the dependency. The plan to progressively wean French Polynesia off metropolitan subsidies has the goal of pushing the local economy toward greater self-reliance, and carefully managed French funding – as well as considerable perseverance – will be imperative to this end.

It has been illustrated however that the sustained political jousting between Flosse and Temaru has had a debilitating effect on French Polynesia. The GIP group's actions in the era following the 2004 elections are interpreted here as deliberate attempts to destabilise the Temaru government. The approach that France has adopted with respect to this recent conflict would suggest in the very least that relations between Paris and the local Independentist population will continue to be defined by hostility and mistrust. In addition, the slow but steady momentum of the independence movement at present means that France needs to tread carefully. There is a very fine line between passive and active involvement in French Polynesia's local political process, and should Temaru's Tavini Huiraatira and others suspect France of further interference, there is a strong potential for violence along Loyalist and Independentist lines. Another 'New Caledonia' scenario would be highly undesirable for the French Republic, and would lend further strength to the argument that stability can only be achieved through a decolonisation involving the transfer of sovereignty.

The evolving relationship between France and its *Outre-mer* may persuade future Paris administrations to review their approach towards pro-independence politicians. It has been suggested that France's overseas populations are no longer so readily accepting of the 'package deal' associated with French sovereignty, and that there is therefore momentum towards the idea of rethinking the relationship. "In effect", Jean-Marc Regnault states, "it can be said that the general atmosphere is leading the French Polynesian society to detach itself from the metropole. On the one hand, the positions in favour of independence are becoming more generalised and on the other hand, it is clear that the partisans of ties with France are selecting these ties by reducing them more and more" (Regnault, 2005, 137). In light of these phenomena the

independence-in-association arrangement would indeed appear useful, as it caters for the ‘partisans of ties’ whilst simultaneously incorporating the trend towards ‘detachment’. For the time being however, the French government will maintain that such arguments do not weigh up against a demonstrable majority in favour of remaining within the Republic.

Much will depend in the final analysis on whether French Polynesia is able to shed the constraints of its nuclear past. This in turn is dependent on France’s contribution to stability through development funding, open dialogue, a desire to clear the air on nuclear testing issues, and tolerance of political change. Most importantly however, stability will improve when the French government demonstrates its willingness to accept democratically legitimate political ideologies in French Polynesia that may not necessarily align with its own interests.

Chapter 6: Analysis

Part One: Case Study Findings

Over the period of 1985 to 2006 France has significantly improved its approach to dealing with its South Pacific dependencies. In keeping with this, the causal relationship between French control and local stability has evolved to the point where France is now widely regarded as playing a constructive role toward the peace and prosperity of the region.

At the time of violent conflict in New Caledonia and anti-nuclear protest in French Polynesia, commentators often qualified France's response to such dilemmas as a *malentendu Pacifique* (De Deckker, 1991, 182), a 'Pacific misunderstanding' whereby France had failed to comprehend the specificities and exigencies of the region. In a broad sense, France's integrative tradition of treating its satellites as extensions of the metropole and its constitutional inability to recognise indigenous peoples were anachronistic. The colonised peoples of the French Pacific compared their own status against that of others in the region, who for the most part had recently acquired independence, or had arrived at association agreements with their former colonisers. The people of the French Pacific were additionally excluded from the new impulse given to the region through the Pacific Islands Forum, that placed statehood as a prerequisite for membership (De Deckker, 1991).

Meanwhile, France continued to pursue its national prerogatives in spite of the protests from the indigenous peoples under its control. This caused a fermentation of general anti-French sentiment, as well as latent hostilities between those supporting continued ties with France and those seeking independence. Such tensions were also representational of the divide between the 'haves' and 'have-nots' in the territorial societies.

New Caledonia

The latent hostilities developed into violent conflict situations in New Caledonia as militant Kanak Independentists clashed with Loyalists from the extreme right. The

lack of cohesiveness in France's plan for the dependency explains this in part: New Caledonia experienced three frameworks for its political evolution between 1985 and 1988, fluctuating between proposals that aggrieved either the Loyalists or the Independentists, thereby inciting them to militate against each other.

Equally responsible was the bias of French policy with regard to the conflicts that occurred over this time. Prime Minister Chirac and Overseas Minister Pons developed a heavy-handed and repressive approach to dealing with the independence movement. The heavy militarisation on the ground and the nomadisation of military troops were initiatives set in place to keep the Independentists on a short tether. That FLNKS security chief Éloi Machoro was most likely 'neutralised' by army snipers as retribution for the death of a local Caldoche boy bears testament to the allegiance of the French State at this time with the local Loyalist population.

This divisive approach to the dependency's instability culminated in the Ouvéa hostage situation in 1988, revealing two things about France's approach to decolonisation-based conflict in New Caledonia:

- 1) France had failed to stop the momentum of the Kanak independence movement through administrative and military repression, and on the contrary had provoked Kanak militants into more desperate and extremist tactics;
- 2) France's approach to the New Caledonian problem was perhaps more the product of distant Paris-centric political expediencies than it was of a genuine desire to resolve hostilities on the ground.

French Polynesia

In French Polynesia conflict principally emerged due to a rejection of the nuclear testing programme and its subsequent impact: the transformation of the local economy to one of extreme dependence, the system of patronage created by Gaston Flosse, and the marginalisation of communities. The Papeete riots of 1987 were a manifestation of the instability generated by the wider social and economic structure, whereas the riots of 1995 were an overt display of local outrage over the decision to lift the testing moratorium.

The CEP also gave momentum to the emergence of a local independence movement: Oscar Temaru's Tavini Huiraatira views France's nuclear testing programme as the primary example of why the territory should be emancipated from the Republic. This progressive emergence of pro-independence sentiment has created tensions with the territory's Loyalist population. Meanwhile, France has acted to uphold its influence through its active advocacy and funding of Gaston Flosse and the Tahoera'a Huiraatira party. The detrimental impact of French policy on stability in French Polynesia is comparatively less pronounced than in New Caledonia. However, it is undeniable that the CEP and its effects on French Polynesia's economic, social and political structures have destabilised the dependency, both through the fermentation of Independentist-Loyalist political tension, and through the civil unrest and damage caused by anti-nuclear disturbances.

A Changing Approach

The year 1988 however has been shown to be a turning point in France's role in the South Pacific (Cordonnier, 1995). The concomitant effects of the Ouvéa hostage-taking in New Caledonia and the ongoing nuclear testing programme in French Polynesia had seen France's contribution to stability – as well as its reputation – reach a record low. As Stephen Bates states, “the initiatives undertaken by the Chirac government both in New Caledonia and in the South Pacific region generally had negative consequences for the stability and unity of the region” (Bates, 1990, 113). In particular, it was the gravity and violence of the Ouvéa situation that encouraged the newly-seated Socialist administration to review the way France dealt with stability problems in its South Pacific dependencies, as well as regional engagement in general.

In New Caledonia there was therefore a shift in focus after 1988 away from a Paris-centric conflict resolution approach to one that better incorporates the interests of the local peoples. The New Caledonia case study has illustrated the work of Socialist Prime Minister Michel Rocard in formulating a conciliatory, dialogue-focused resolution method to the New Caledonian problem. The Matignon Accords process was symbolic of a “fundamental rupture in the perception of the territory by the

French government” (Cordonnier, 1995, 185). Moreover, the unprecedented nature of this agreement was demonstrated in France’s decision to finally allow for the possibility of an independent New Caledonia. A referendum on self-determination was planned, and unlike preceding polls it gave both Independentists and Loyalists a considerable degree of preparation time, as well as a reasonable guarantee that it would take place on a level playing field.

This approach was advanced with the Noumea Accord of 1998, an agreement that seeks to promote peace even further through the germination of a New Caledonian citizenship, and through the irreversible transfer of powers to local government in keeping with the concept of ‘shared sovereignty’. Whether or not the impending 2019 referendum reveals the population in favour of independence or remaining French, New Caledonia is guaranteed to benefit from a considerable degree of control over its own affairs, as well as from a long-term development project to redress social and economic inequalities. Though the Noumea Accord process is not yet finished, it is perhaps now safe to suggest that the truce achieved under the Matignon Accords has developed into a more lasting peace (Henningham, 1992). This positive progression towards a more stabilising role can also be seen in relation to France’s wider regional outlook, where it has become more recognisant of the importance of regional integration, aid initiatives and co-operative regional engagement¹¹⁹.

France’s evolution toward playing a positive stabilising role in both New Caledonia and in the wider region however has been mitigated to an extent by the case of French Polynesia. It is undeniable that France’s post-CEP approach to the dependency has known many successes: French Polynesia has gradually detached itself from the centralised administration of the metropole, and has also received a solemn guarantee from France to transform the dilapidated CEP-based economy into one with greater self-reliance. However, it would not be correct to state that France’s approach to French Polynesia underwent a positive transformation in the years after 1988 similar to that of New Caledonia. In the first instance, the aspect of policy that had the most destabilising impact on the dependency had not been withdrawn: in spite of ardent

¹¹⁹ For important complementary information on the evolution of France’s wider regional engagement see **Appendix #6: Recent French Diplomacy in the South Pacific**.

local and regional opposition the nuclear testing programme remained non-negotiable, and was only discontinued in 1996 once its mandate had been fulfilled. The riots that broke out in 1995 after Chirac announced the resumption of testing, for example, is evidence of France's willingness to tolerate a certain degree of instability in the territory in the pursuit of 'vital' policy objectives.

Secondly, French Polynesia's statutory evolution towards greater autonomy has been a mixed blessing, granting the benefits of self-government on the one hand while ensconcing French sovereign control on the other. New Caledonia's evolution has increased stability by satisfying the wish of the independence movement to have the independence question submitted to a vote. In comparison, French Polynesia's detachment from the metropole has *decreased* stability, as it has for the most part been the design of Gaston Flosse, the most ardent advocate of the French presence in the region, and under whom a referendum on self-determination would never eventuate. In this way, the emergence of the pro-independence movement in response to the inequalities of the Flosse system has meant that "French Polynesia has...become the new *enfant terrible* of the South Pacific. While relations between the metropole and the territory of New Caledonia have become progressively normalised, they have become strained little by little between Paris and Papeete" (Cordonnier, 1995, 195). This is only too evident in the events that have transpired since 2004, when pro-independence politician Oscar Temaru threatened continued French control by briefly acceding to Territorial President.

A Fundamental Constant Remains

The impact of France on stability in the South Pacific has varied in accordance with the positions of successive French governments, principally illustrated in the contrasting approaches taken by the Conservative Chirac and the Socialist Rocard governments. Nonetheless, a general trend can be observed over the time period of 1985 to 2006 toward more even-handed conflict resolution methods and a more Pacific-centric approach to regional stability.

Over the same time period however there has remained one fundamental obstacle to achieving total stability in the South Pacific, and continues to provide a latent potential for conflict in the present day. France's wish that its dependencies remain

French has been the one truly constant aspect of French policy in the region, having been unanimously agreed upon and upheld by successive French governments, and by almost all parties within France's domestic political system. The desire to retain sovereignty was more obvious in the era of violent Loyalist-Independentist conflict in New Caledonia and nuclear testing in French Polynesia, as the already apparent instabilities were further exacerbated by France's efforts to undermine those actors seeking a total French withdrawal. In the post-Ouvéa, post-nuclear testing era, France's approach has changed in order to better accommodate local concerns, better address local inequalities, and win the approval of the wider South Pacific region. Its underlying objective to retain sovereignty however has remained the same:

[t]here is a sharp contrast between the French conception of decolonisation in the Pacific and that of the independent English-speaking countries in the region. For the latter, decolonisation means the disappearance of the state power held by the colonial power after an act of self-determination as happened in Fiji, Papua New Guinea and other nations colonised by Britain, Australia and New Zealand. **For France, decolonisation is defined as the elimination of social relationships of a colonial character, but without questioning the sovereignty of France. This is the sense in which the French government has interpreted the Matignon Accords in New Caledonia since 1988 – the proposed act of self-determination will be conducted under the provisions of Article 53 of the French constitution, rather than under the principles and practice of decolonisation established by the United Nations** (MacLellan and Chesneaux, 1998, 89) [Emphasis added].

France therefore regards the issue of decolonisation as an internal matter, and takes umbrage at any challenge to this approach. France does not acknowledge the jurisdiction of the United Nations in matters pertaining to the decolonisation of its dependencies, and considers any discussion of the situation as interference in its internal affairs (Dornoy-Vurobaravu, 1994, 9). France's transposition of the decolonisation issue from the international to the domestic realm has been the tried and true method to stave off Independentist-related pressures within its own dependencies. Self-determination, France claims, is entirely possible within the French Republic, and therefore the assertion by the United Nations that it is a right of all peoples is irrelevant¹²⁰. However, whether or not France is capable of acting as impartially as the United Nations in self-determination issues is disputable.

¹²⁰ The preamble to the French Constitution of 1946 specifically refers to France's intention "to lead the peoples under its charge toward the freedom to govern themselves and to democratically manage their own affairs".

New Caledonia into the Future

What implications does this have for the future stability of New Caledonia and French Polynesia? The Noumea Accord provides New Caledonia with a referendum on self-determination in 2019, but French sovereignty will most likely be upheld. For the time being France has some breathing room in the Noumea Accord's provision for a delayed vote, but as the referendum draws near New Caledonia's political landscape will likely polarise into the familiar Loyalist-Independentist cleavage.

The recent court decision to 'freeze' the electorate for this poll means that the balance between Loyalists and Independentists will be closer than ever before. However, this may be little more than a carefully calculated risk on the part of France, and thus unlikely to tip the scale in the Independentists' favour. What is clear is that many factors continue to weigh against the independence movement. It has been estimated that approximately 35% of the New Caledonian population is in favour of independence¹²¹. The FLNKS grouping is tenuously held together, and FLNKS representatives remain a minority within the Territorial Congress. This recognised lack of numbers and cohesion may provide the FLNKS with all the more reason to boycott the referendum in the face of an inevitable Loyalist victory. A boycott would almost undoubtedly usher in another period of political instability, a scenario that should be avoided at all costs. Under another scenario, perhaps the twenty year lead-up period to the referendum will stymie the momentum of the Independentist cause, as the bitter conflict of the 1980s becomes a more distant memory to younger Kanak generations.

Opting to defer the referendum for self-determination therefore could again prove a worthwhile alternative to potential hostilities. The inevitable win-lose scenario of the referendum would again be avoided for as long as necessary, and France would gain another guaranteed period of sovereignty over the dependency. As always, however, a potential for conflict will stem from a hardened core of Independentists who feel frustrated that they have yet again been deprived of the rightful vote for their rightful cause: self-determination provided under the auspices of the United Nations.

¹²¹ 'France in the South Pacific', a presentation by French Ambassador to New Zealand S.E.M Jean-Michel Marlaud, European Studies Department, University of Canterbury 2006.

French Polynesia into the Future

Meanwhile, French Polynesia's statute provides no possibility for an accession to independence, and the French government's approach toward the short-lived pro-independence President Oscar Temaru was not encouraging. France no doubt perceived Temaru's accession to Territorial President as having the potential to be the thin end of the wedge for a push toward decolonisation, though whether or not it has remained impartial from the sidelines is open for debate. Like in New Caledonia, the independence movement will only interpret suspected French involvement in local matters as another reason why independence should be sought for their homeland. French Polynesian Independentists wish to be granted the same negotiated transition towards independence as that obtained by their New Caledonian counterparts, and this will continue to feature on the agenda in the years to come. Moreover, the residual problems of the CEP and the *système Flosse* mean that French Polynesia continues to live in a nuclear shadow, and a section of the population continues to be systemically marginalised by French funding and control. Until France is able to remedy these systemic problems and prove itself unbiased in its approach to the local political process, the decolonisation-based struggle will continue to undermine French Polynesia's political stability.

Part Two: Hierarchy of Key Variables

This analysis will now address the relationship between the factors motivating France's unwillingness to cede sovereignty to its South Pacific dependencies, and the resultant impact on local stability. To this end, a hierarchy will be established among those factors informing a colonial power's desire to retain sovereignty over its dependencies. Some necessary assumptions must be made:

- I. The colonial power's desire to retain sovereignty will destabilise the dependency in question through the emergence of decolonisation-based tensions and conflict;
- II. The colonial power will then respond with resolution methods designed to end the conflict while upholding its sovereign control.

The strong link between relationships of a colonial nature and the emergence of decolonisation-based instability is already well documented, and is clearly observed

in the French Pacific through the work of the FLNKS in New Caledonia and the Tavini Huiraatira in French Polynesia. Secondly, it is beyond the scope of this thesis to explore the relationship between factors informing a colonial power's desire to retain sovereignty and the different resolution methods it may employ in response to decolonisation-based conflict. In this way, the conflict resolution method employed – strategies that seek to end conflict whilst ultimately upholding sovereignty over the dependency – is assumed to be constant.

With these assumptions in mind, the relative importance of the key variables – strategic, economic and emotional interests – will be ascertained in order to establish a hierarchy among those factors informing a colonial power's desire to retain control of its dependencies in the post-colonial era.

Strategic Interests

Over the time period of 1985-2006 France's strategic interest in retaining sovereignty of its Pacific dependencies can be observed with respect to three key areas: pursuing an independent nuclear deterrent through the CEP in French Polynesia, maintaining a global French defence network through its military forces in the region, and controlling the nickel reserves in New Caledonia. It will be argued here however that the completion of nuclear testing in 1996, the redundancy of the 'strategic denial' rationalisations used during the Cold War era, and the evolution of the New Caledonian nickel industry has meant that France's strategic interest in maintaining sovereignty in the South Pacific has been significantly reduced.

Certainly, during the first half of the period of enquiry the interwoven relationship between French strategic interests and its reluctance to decolonise is undeniable. Paul de Deckker (1991) notes how the strategic aspect of maintaining sovereignty in the South Pacific came to override a decolonisation process that was already in motion: France was in fact the first power in Oceania to negotiate the movement towards decolonisation of its territories with the *loi-cadre* of 1956, conceived as a transitory phase leading to independence. However, the change in national priorities that accompanied the establishment of the Fifth Republic led to a reversal of this process, and since this time France's desire to establish itself as a nuclear power has been suggested to be the single most important reason for its reluctance to decolonise in the

South Pacific¹²². While explanations vary as to the underlying reasons behind the desire for nuclear capability, they typically refer to France's 'Grand Design' to establish itself as a *puissance mondiale moyenne*, a medium-sized world power comprising a global network of French territories, a military presence in all of the world's oceans, and an independent nuclear deterrent. As De Deckker states, "[t]he nuclear independence of France – one of the foundations of the Fifth Republic – was at the origin of the cessation of the statutory emancipation of French Polynesia and New Caledonia" (1991, 172).

From the implantation of the CEP onwards therefore, preserving French sovereignty in the Pacific became a *raison d'état*, a strategic national imperative based on acceding to the 'atomic club' (Maclellan and Chesneaux, 1998, 78). "[The Pacific area] has a clear strategic interest", claimed France's former Minister for External Affairs, "since the maintenance of our nuclear independence requires us to carry out the testing we're doing in Polynesia. We can't find any place nearer to France which has the geological structures suitable for underground testing" (Cheysson, cited in Takeuchi and Danielsson, 1988).

With regard to New Caledonia, France argued during the CEP era that it was of equal strategic importance, because it served as a relay point for the military vessels and equipment necessary for the tests. Furthermore, under the so-called domino theory France argued that granting independence to New Caledonia would encourage the independence movement in French Polynesia, ultimately threatening the success of the CEP (Bates, 1990, 17). The primary justification however was New Caledonia's substantial nickel reserves. Nickel is considered to be a 'strategic mineral' as it is essential for the production of super alloys, magnets, and products specifically pertaining to defence (Bates, 1990, 17). The French mining giant Eramet – of which the French State is the majority stakeholder – is the parent company of SLN, New Caledonia's first established nickel processing plant. Certainly, periods of high demand for nickel such as the boom witnessed in the 1960s and 1970s have seen France benefit from its strategic control of this finite resource.

¹²² See Bates 1990.

However, many of the various explanations that have been offered as to why France has a strategic interest in the South Pacific have been critiqued, whilst others have simply become outdated. First and foremost, the end of the CEP in French Polynesia has removed what has been shown to be France's fundamental underlying reason for the retention of sovereign control. This applies not only to French Polynesia, but also to the somewhat shaky claim that New Caledonia was a necessary part of this wider initiative. French involvement is nonetheless required in the post-CEP years in order to transform the territorial economy, but this does not necessitate continued sovereign control. In addition, the sizeable French military presence involved in the operation of the CEP has for the most part been withdrawn, while the end of the Cold War has made redundant the justification that France defends the region against Soviet advances. France continues to maintain a military presence in both dependencies¹²³, but "[t]hese units do not, however, have any operational capacity. French military forces in the Pacific are not intended to fight against an external enemy, which in any case does not exist... (Maclellan and Chesneaux, 1998, 86).

With regard to New Caledonia's nickel industry,

France has given independence to nearly all of its former colonies in Africa and these still allow French companies to exploit their raw materials and the French military to use their facilities...It would appear that the wish to guarantee access to strategic metals is more a secondary motive that lends additional strength to more fundamental reasons for maintaining a French presence, but that is not sufficient reason on its own to require such a strong commitment (Bates, 1990, 19).

This can be compounded with the fact that the Noumea Accord saw France cede a degree of control over the dependency's nickel deposits to the Kanak-controlled Northern Province. Where once the French government prevented foreign companies from establishing companies that would compete with its own nickel plant, it now encourages foreign participation as a means to energising the local economy (De Deckker, 2004a, 204). Certainly, the current willingness of France to cede control of this resource for purposes of local economic development and rebalancing is evidence

¹²³ See **Appendix #7: French Military Forces in the South Pacific region.**

that nickel is of far greater importance to the prosperity of New Caledonia, than it is to the strategic interests of the French Republic.

For these reasons it is therefore unlikely that France's reluctance to grant sovereignty to its South Pacific dependencies is primarily the product of current strategic interests. Its desire to be a middle-sized world power and its commitment to uphold a military presence in the region may partially explain why France wants the Pacific 'chapter' of its overseas network to remain French, but there is little evidence to suggest that such assets could not be maintained in an independent French Polynesia and New Caledonia. In the post-CEP, post-Cold War era, it is the *absence* of external forces at play within the wider global system that reveal the extent to which strategic considerations have diminished in continued French control.

Economic Interests

The second variable to be tested is 'economic interests,' referring to those aspects of a colonial power's policy aimed at exploiting the human and non-human resources available in its dependencies for economic advantage. There are a limited number of ways in which France profits from maintaining sovereignty in the South Pacific, the first being control of the dependencies' substantial Exclusive Economic Zones (EEZs). As Bates illustrates, "with the signing of the United Nations Convention of the Sea in 1982, the economic importance of New Caledonia, French Polynesia and even Wallis and Futuna has taken on a new dimension. The extension of internationally recognised territorial limits to 200 nautical miles has endowed France with a combined total of 11 million square kilometres in Exclusive Economic Zones worldwide, of which two-thirds or 7 million square kilometres are in the South Pacific" (1990, 18). This "undeniable asset" makes France the second largest maritime power in the world (De Deckker, 2004a, 205), as well as a significant player in regional fisheries initiatives.

France also benefits economically from its involvement in the exploitation of New Caledonian nickel which, while technically described as a 'strategic' resource, has been one of the few raw materials from the French Pacific to be profitable in the long term in the global market. As outlined above, France's majority share of mining company Eramet means that it will profit from nickel extraction for as long as the

subsidiary SLN plant in the Southern Province continues to function. While the bulk of nickel ore extracted annually is currently exported in its raw form, the SLN refinery generates an average of 56,000 tons of metal each year, and for the year 2000 refined nickel exports were worth 54 billion French Pacific Francs [approximately US \$610 million] (Horowitz, 2004). On the world stage nickel prices have recently soared due to increased demand from emerging countries such as China and India. One tonne of the mineral is now worth around US \$30,000, whereas five years ago it was worth US \$6,000 (Oceania_Flash, 2006e).

However, there is near unanimous agreement among analysts that economic considerations do not figure highly in France's reluctance to decolonise in the South Pacific. In the first instance, it has been stated that France's colonisation of the region was never completely motivated by the desire for economic advantage. "French sovereignty in the Pacific", observe Maclellan and Chesneaux, "cannot be analysed simply in the classic terms of 'colonial exploitation' and 'imperialist plundering'. It is of a different nature to French domination in Indochina, or British domination in India, which were both effectively founded on direct exploitation to the benefit of the larger colonial capitalist system" (1998, 87). Notwithstanding New Caledonia's nickel industry, there are scant natural assets that the South Pacific dependencies can offer to the mainland. The business of cultivating black pearls¹²⁴ in French Polynesia has shown signs of promise, and tourism¹²⁵ has been given new impetus in both dependencies, but these local industries are moreover ways of contributing to the local economies, and would be of negligible importance to the economy of the wider Republic.

The fact therefore that the local economies are not self-sustaining, in combination with the numerous other bills attached with the French presence, makes maintaining sovereignty over New Caledonia, French Polynesia and Wallis-and-Futuna a very costly exercise. According to De Deckker, "[s]een through a purely economic logic, France has no apparent interest whatsoever in maintaining its presence in the three territories" (2004a, 204). Shineberg illustrates that the French metropolitan budget

¹²⁴ See Chesneaux 1995, Saque 2002, Vigneron in Jost (Ed.) 1998.

¹²⁵ Ibid.

regularly contributes over 60% of the public sector spending in the dependencies. Total French funding for New Caledonia and French Polynesia at present is calculated to be in the vicinity of two billion New Zealand dollars for each dependency per year (Marlaud, 2006).

This considerable cost is typically countered with reference to the fact that French spending for its entire overseas network equates to slightly more than a mere one percent of the national budget (De Deckker, 2004a). Yet this is not a plausible justification for maintaining sovereignty along economic lines, and it has been shown above that France's expenditure far outweighs its financial return. In the final analysis, "[t]he French territories of the Pacific, lucrative as they may be for local privileged groups, are not profit-making as such. Overall they are a liability rather than an asset" (Chesneaux, 1987, 6).

It can be thus concluded that economic interests play an extremely limited role in France's reluctance to grant sovereignty to its South Pacific dependencies. If anything, France's economic interests would be better served by a total French withdrawal.

Emotional Interests

The last variable to be tested is emotional interests, defined as the socially constructed sense of national value or interest that exists independently or in spite of rational decision-making factors.

The suggestion that France's approach to its South Pacific dependencies may be motivated by factors additional to rational gains is not a new concept. In fact, analyses of the French presence in the region are peppered with references to factors that could be described as 'emotional'. Value-loaded concepts such as 'the glory of the Republic', 'the enlightenment of the French presence' and 'Grand Design' convey a sense of there being something more important than mere money or strategic power in France's global outlook.

Dornoy-Vurobaravu for example writes of the value-bearing system of ‘francophony’. Transcending the boundaries of a community merely created by a shared language, francophony is a way of showcasing French identity and culture through its overseas territories, while at the same time contributing to a “universal brotherhood” of French-speaking lands that share a common heritage and destiny (Dornoy-Vurobaravu, 1994). Certainly, francophony encompasses a strategic aspect, since the desire for French ‘display windows’ is contingent on the control of foreign territories, with all the strategic advantages that this control entails. What is ‘emotional’ about francophony however is the desire to unify the French speaking populations of the world through a sense of fraternity that would otherwise not exist. Some observers therefore concluded after the Algerian war that “francophony tried to simplify a whole culture and civilisation and served to perpetuate a situation where colonial domination was raised to universal brotherhood” (Dornoy-Vurobaravu, 1994, 4).

Jean Chesneaux has similarly coined the term “franconesie” as an expression of France’s “manifest destiny” in the Pacific (1987, 6). Franconesie explains the French determination to remain present in the Pacific based on *raison d’état*, the necessity above all else to pursue the advancement of the French Republic. Franconesie also encompasses the emotionally charged determination to defend the French presence against “the hostile forces in its political environment,” indicative of France’s “besieged citadel complex”, so characteristic of the French in the Pacific, whether they be military personnel, diplomats, businessmen or academics” (Chesneaux, 1987, 7).

Indeed, it has been theorised that France’s determination to stay in the region may in part be the product of a perceived residual tension between French-Catholic interests on the one hand, and Anglosaxon-Protestant interests on the other¹²⁶. In the past France has interpreted regional criticisms of its policy as being part of an Australian

¹²⁶ David Camroux states that “in France, one tends to use the expression “Anglo-Saxon” a bit too much as a geopolitical category and not purely a cultural one. The use of this concept in a country like Australia with pronounced Irish and Scottish influences, and where nearly a third of the population is of a non-anglophone origin, must be done with caution” (Assemblée Nationale, *Colloque Parlementaire: La France et les États du Pacifique Sud*, France 1996).

and New Zealand plot to “chase France out of the Pacific” (Assemblée_Nationale, 1996, 51). However, such conclusions are more likely to be derived from the French national perception of the English that has developed over the course of a turbulent shared history, and thus have little relevance in the South Pacific at the present day. Chesneaux has playfully suggested that the Pacific might be “the last battlefield” for the centuries-old confrontation between Britons and Gauls (Chesneaux, 1987, 7). Even French observers have stated that such theories entertained by France are without foundation: “on the one hand, historically there has never been a real desire for conquest on the part of [Australia and New Zealand] ...on the other hand, in Canberra and in Wellington, people are very conscious of the economic burden that the Pacific territories represent for Paris, and in economically difficult times they do not see any interest in taking charge of this responsibility” (Assemblée_Nationale, 1996, 53). At all times, it seems, France’s sovereign control of its Pacific dependencies may be as much borne out of national self-interest as it is out of a refusal to see the region become an entirely ‘Anglo-Saxon lake’.

More importantly still, the concept of a ‘Grand Design’ for France and its reluctance to grant sovereignty to its dependencies can be placed within a historical international context. As Dornoy-Vurobaravu notes, “[g]overnments of the Fifth Republic...have consistently aimed to increase French international prestige” (1994), and “[t]he struggle to retain the last vestiges of empire while developing new forms of neo-colonialism has been a central element of French presidential politics since the Second World War (MacLellan and Chesneaux, 1998, 78).

Essentially, the “unrealistic colonial policy” of more peaceful times appeared to have caught up with France after the Second World War, when it was forced to relinquish parts of its Empire after humiliating military defeats in Indochina (1945-54) and Algeria (1954-62) (MacLellan and Chesneaux, 1998, 76). De Gaulle’s vision of a “Glorious France” was therefore to be achieved through the reinvigoration and tightening of links with its peripheries, and the attainment of a medium-sized world power status through the development of an independent nuclear capability. Defence interests were to be given the upmost priority under De Gaulle, who perceived France

as having been humiliated and demoralised by the Nazi occupation, the Soviet nuclear threat to Paris and the US betrayal of French interests during the Suez crisis of 1956 (Bates, 1990, 13). Reluctantly granting independence to Algeria in 1962 thus had a double impact on France: in the first instance it was forced to search for a new site for the nuclear testing programme¹²⁷; in the second it resolved to prevent a traumatic and embarrassing Algerian-type situation from ever happening again.

In this way, Bates notes the strong connection between France's granting of sovereignty to Algeria and the tightening of central government control in its South Pacific territories: "[w]ith Algeria now ruled out, the [French Polynesian] Tuamotu Group was the obvious replacement. Fearful of the Algerian episode, De Gaulle was determined to nip any independence movement in the bud" (Bates, 1990, 13). The result of this historical progression is finally that the policies of successive French governments in modern times have sought, whether consciously or not, to advance France along the same emotive path as that laid out by De Gaulle (Dornoy-Vurobaravu, 1994, x).

It becomes clear therefore that France's determination to remain in the South Pacific transcends the pursuit of strategic gains or economic advantage. Instead, the concepts of francophony, *franconésie* and France's Grand Design reveal this determination to be inextricably linked with a sense of aspiration for national *mana* and prestige, a conduit for national morale in the post-World War, post-Algerian war environment. The degree of emotional interest in France's unwillingness to grant sovereignty to its South Pacific dependencies is therefore strong.

What relative potencies are therefore to be ascribed to strategic, economic, and emotional interests in France's unwillingness to grant sovereignty to its South Pacific dependencies? Based on the above analysis, the hierarchical order is as follows:

¹²⁷ Algeria was France's first choice as a testing site, both for its geographical proximity to the French mainland and for the existence nearby of a large airport.

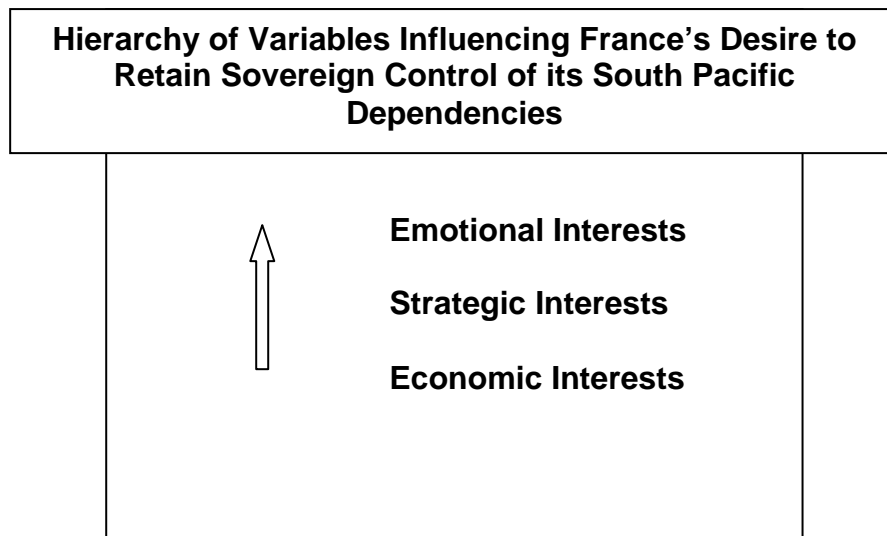


Figure 1: Hierarchy of Variables Influencing France's Desire to Retain Sovereign Control of its South Pacific Dependencies

France's economic interest in maintaining its sovereignty over the French Pacific dependencies has been shown to be insignificant, as the considerable financial resources devolved by France towards territorial economies and development initiatives undeniably outweigh the returns gained from sovereign control. EEZ control and nickel industry-related returns are profitable to an extent, but are more likely to be subsidiary or *post-facto* justifications for the French presence and not plausible motivating factors in themselves. 'Economic interests' is thus the least determinant of the three variables in France's reluctance to grant sovereignty.

The 'strategic interests' variable exerts a much larger degree of influence. France's strategic objective of becoming a medium-sized world power has been achieved in the first instance by independently developing a nuclear deterrent in French Polynesia, and in the second by maintaining a permanent military presence in the region. French strategic interests are also served by France's sovereign control over New Caledonia's 'strategic' nickel reserves. Nonetheless, now that the objective of nuclear deterrence has been fulfilled the strategic interest argument appears far less tenable. The end of the Cold War and the absence of international strategic threats in the region would further support this claim. These considerations place strategic interests as the second most important factor in the three-variable hierarchy.

Finally, the 'emotional interests' variable has been demonstrated to be pivotal in France's commitment to remaining in the South Pacific region. This has developed due to both historical circumstances and overarching national objectives (the 'Grand Design' of the Fifth Republic and the 'global brotherhood' of francophony). While over the time period of 1985-2006 economic interests may never have been of significance, and strategic interests have certainly waned, the emotional value drawn from having French peoples and French sovereign lands in the South Pacific has remained a constant priority for successive governments of the Fifth Republic. It is thus with this in mind that France's particular interpretation of decolonisation can be explained. Therefore it is the emotional interests variable that most influences France's determination to maintain sovereign control over its South Pacific dependencies.

Chapter 7: Conclusion

It has thereby been shown that ‘emotional interests’ inform to a large degree France’s determination to retain control of its South Pacific dependencies. Within the parameters of this study, this variable is therefore the biggest contributor to the emergence of decolonisation-based instability or conflict in New Caledonia and French Polynesia. With this in mind, while France’s impact on conflict and stability in New Caledonia and French Polynesia has become more positive over the time period of 1985-2006, its determination to retain sovereignty means that there continues to be a latent potential for political instability to emerge from decolonisation-based struggle.

Strengths of Investigation

A Relevant Contemporary Analysis

Much has occurred in the sphere of France-Pacific relations since the signing of the Noumea Accords in 1998, a date that was believed by many observers to mark the end of instability in the French Pacific. Since this time there has nonetheless been violent conflict between Kanaks and Wallis-and-Futunians in New Caledonia, a swath of nickel-related dilemmas, a protracted political crisis in French Polynesia – including the dubious ousting of a pro-independence President – and considerable debate over the benefit of remaining French in the new millennium. This analysis has revealed that there is still uncertainty over the ability of the Noumea Accord to deliver a lasting peace in New Caledonia, as well as an increasingly polarised Loyalist-Independentist divide among French Polynesians. It has therefore been established that while France’s approach has certainly improved, instabilities based around its stance on decolonisation continue to emerge in the present day.

Hierarchy of Key Variables

The ‘emotional interests’ variable appears to mesh well with France’s contemporary presence in the South Pacific region. The suggestion that approaches toward decolonisation can be guided by actors’ historical and national value systems has been shown to fill in the gaps left by interpretations economic gain and strategic

advantage¹²⁸. Under such logic it is thus understandable that France's memories of World War II and the Algerian war would make it reluctant to relinquish any more of its overseas territory, regardless of whether these 'fragments of Empire' are profitable or strategically desirable. It also explains why France wants to dictate the nature of the centre-periphery relationship on its own terms, defending a 'sovereignty at a cost' scenario against one of 'free association with benefits'.

The principal strength of this 'emotional interests' variable is that it could be applied to other examples of anachronistic colonial situations, in order to isolate the primary factors provoking decolonisation-based conflict in the contemporary global environment. Should the emotional interests variable prove to be a common theme in all cases examined, a form of framework could then be established in order to develop decolonisation-based conflict resolution methods that balance (a) the desire of indigenous peoples for independence on the one hand, and (b) the emotional importance that the colonial power equates with continued ties on the other. New Caledonia's Noumea Accord is perhaps a good base point from which such solutions could be developed: its provision to delay the issue of independence to a much later date (in combination with a much-needed redistribution of wealth and resources) has thus far proved to be an effective way of reducing tensions, while giving all parties concerned –including France – sufficient time to advance their own respective causes.

Limitations of Investigation

Hierarchy of Variables

A primary limitation is that the importance of 'emotional interests' was only proved in relation to two other variables. Indeed, many other variables could potentially have an impact on a colonial power's reluctance to grant independence to its territories. In this thesis the economic and strategic variables have been derived from Roseau's 'non-human resources' and 'systemic' variables respectively, but other variables in Roseau's pre-theory of foreign policy framework could also be applied. The

¹²⁸ For example, if France is losing financially by asserting its sovereign control of New Caledonia and French Polynesia – and is not recouping any other form of tangible benefit from this control – why is France itself not spearheading the process toward their total emancipation? Why is France willing to allow its regional reputation to suffer for the sake of retaining these traditional ties, when it would nonetheless continue to have a close relationship with an independent New Caledonia and French Polynesia? These questions can only be answered by reconceptualising France's approach to its dependencies as being about something more than material considerations.

‘individual’ variable for example could reveal the extent to which key decision-makers have impacted on the relationship between France and its dependencies: this would especially be observed in the case of President De Gaulle in France, Flosse in French Polynesia or Lafleur in New Caledonia. The ‘governmental’ variable could be used to explain the role of France’s government structure in this approach, particularly the constitutional principle that the Republic is indivisible. It has been conceded from the outset of this study that the three variables to be tested were merely based on factors *likely* to be present in colonial situations, but in order to more accurately determine the importance of the ‘emotional interests’ variable a much larger range of variables must be considered.

Secondly, only two case studies were examined in this study in order to deduce France’s approach toward its dependencies. For the accuracy of the ‘emotional interests’ variable to be proved, it would need to be applied to *all* French territories where there has emerged decolonisation-based conflict. While nonetheless promising, the case studies of New Caledonia and French Polynesia cannot prove with certainty the existence of a universal causal relationship.

Thirdly, this study has assumed a causality between a colonial power’s reluctance to grant sovereignty to its territories, the emergence of decolonisation-based conflict, and the colonial power’s subsequent use of conflict resolution mechanisms aimed at preserving sovereign control. This assumed causal relationship has been confirmed in the case of France *vis-à-vis* New Caledonia, but it may not be so clear-cut in other cases¹²⁹. More work is therefore needed on the causality of the relationship between the emergence of decolonisation-based tensions in territories and the various responses of colonial powers.

Fourthly, while France’s desire to maintain sovereignty since the inception of the CEP has remained constant, differing governments have varied greatly over the general

¹²⁹ For example, how would this theory explain the (admittedly unlikely) situation of a colonial power responding to decolonisation-based conflict in one of its territories by initiating a radical restructuring of the relationship, such as a federal system, or independence-in-association? Further, how would it explain colonial powers that simply *ignore* decolonisation-based conflict in their dependencies, thereby demonstrating themselves to be passively complicit with instability in lands under their sovereign control?

policies pursued in the French Pacific dependencies, and have thus had differing impacts on instability. Relations between the French government and the territorial governments tend to be constructive when their political tendencies align (such as metropolitan conservatives and territorial conservatives), but become quickly strained when they clash (such as metropolitan socialists and territorial conservatives). For the most part these governmental variations have been acknowledged in this thesis, but for future study it would be more focused to study the impact of the policies of only one metropolitan government on regional stability. For example, the policies of the Chirac government from 1986 to 1988 could be compared with that of the Rocard government of 1988 to 1991. Certainly, the complex dynamic created from two independently operating political systems – and the ability of one to penetrate the other – dictates that policies can only be objectively analysed by keeping their political context as constant as possible.

Future Study Implications

The ‘emotional interests’ variable could henceforth be applied to other situations of continued colonial rule in the global context, in order to establish whether or not emotional interests are a common element in the decision-making process of all modern-day colonial powers¹³⁰. Such enquiry could potentially offer core reasons for why global decolonisation is not as yet a finished process.

In addition, it may also be possible to break down the ‘emotional interests’ variable into smaller subset groups. With respect to France for example, does its emotional reluctance to grant sovereignty principally result from the demoralising defeats suffered in the past, or does it more so reflect a French cultural desire to ‘enlighten’ far-away regions? Does France draw more emotional value from the overseas *territory* it controls, or is it more attached to its Francophone overseas *populations*? Addressing such questions would allow the emotional interests variable to be distilled down to a more concise and pointed form.

¹³⁰ For example, are emotional interests observable in Indonesia’s continued sovereign control over West Papua? To what extent does the approach of Indonesia to West Papua differ to the approach taken by France to its South Pacific dependencies?

Recommendations

The findings of this thesis allow for two principal recommendations to be made on how France can better improve stability in its French Pacific dependencies. The first is that France will continue to be met with a degree of resentment and hostility in its dependencies for as long as it continues to penetrate local politics. This was seen with respect to the 1987 referendum on self-determination in New Caledonia, where FLNKS lobbying was actively undermined by French military tactics. It was also seen in the 2004 elections in French Polynesia, where the French Overseas Minister revealed herself to be openly hostile to a democratically elected coalition headed by an Independentist. France is clearly capable of influencing local political systems, but it must avoid this temptation at all costs if it wishes to avoid the potential repercussions stemming from groups who feel that have been repressed through French bias. French involvement in local politics may convince pro-independence groups that there is no way of obtaining their goal through peaceful political means. If France is prepared to manipulate local politics every time its sovereign control becomes threatened, then Independentists will reasonably conclude that negotiated settlements are futile, and that militancy is the only way that independence can be achieved.

For this reason, France could potentially benefit from allowing an external third-party mediator to referee in independence-related disputes. For example, calling upon the Pacific Islands Forum or the Pacific Community to monitor or manage elections would reassure pro-independence movements that France is committed to a fair and democratic process. Fact-finding missions and Ministerial level trips by Forum members to New Caledonia have generated optimism about France's increasing openness in the region¹³¹, but such external involvement could plausibly be extended to a Forum-organised referendum on self-determination. If France is confident that the Loyalist voting bloc can overcome the Independentists unaided, then it should have nothing to fear in allowing a disinterested third party to conduct the poll. Working through regional organisations also seems to suit France's purposes in the sense that it would sidestep the difficulties posed by United Nations involvement. Using the UN as third-party mediator would equate to an admission by France that decolonisation is an

¹³¹ See 'Forum Visit Signals Warming of Pacific Relations', *Oceania Flash* (July 26 2004).

international and not a domestic matter, while using the Forum may allow this distinction to be circumnavigated.

Secondly, France could help improve stability by demonstrating more of a willingness to explore alternative methods of defining the mainland-periphery relationship for the future. Pro-independence groups have for the most part militated against French colonial rule after becoming frustrated with France's refusal to entertain any other possibility than continued sovereign control. For this reason, a future 'independence in association with France' arrangement could plausibly bridge the gap between (a) France's determination to retain close ties with Franco-centric overseas territories, as well as maintain a French sphere of influence in the South Pacific, and (b) the conviction of indigenous peoples that independence is the precondition to achieving any form of harmonious postcolonial society. It is posited here that France would lose very little by granting independence to New Caledonia or French Polynesia under such an arrangement.

Lastly, there is room for France to now rethink its image in the South Pacific. Regardless of whether its South Pacific dependencies become independent or not, it is clear that they are administratively drifting away from the metropole. As this drift becomes more pronounced, and France is inevitably made to confront new priorities as part of the European Union, the argument that France is 'naturally present' in the region will become less tenable in the long term. Therefore, the question remains: should France regard itself as being 'in' the region, or 'of' the region? France has an undoubtedly positive role to play in the South Pacific, but the assertion by a large and powerful state of Western Europe that it is a 'natural' member of this community can only be met with scepticism. The small island states of the South Pacific share an identity resting on a bedrock of common geography, common backgrounds, common challenges and common goals. France could thus find greater benefit in an 'outside-in' approach to the South Pacific, where it could create an even greater consent environment for its presence in the region by acknowledging that it is an 'outside' but not an 'inside' power.

Affluent Dependencies or Struggling Sovereign States? Evaluating the French Presence in the Contemporary Regional Environment

As has been shown in the case studies of New Caledonia and French Polynesia, over the period of 1985 to 2006 French policy in the South Pacific has evolved toward playing a more Pacific-centric, co-operative, and stabilising role. Because of the Matignon-Noumea Accord process, violent decolonisation-based conflict has now been absent from New Caledonia for nearly twenty years. This is a reflection of France's more conciliatory and even-handed approach to tensions between local communities, as well as the desire to address the root causes of inter-ethnic hostility and mistrust. Regionally the French approach has equally improved, with a better integration of its dependencies into their South Pacific environment, and a commitment by France in the post-CEP era to be more attentive to regional problems and concerns. However, the systems put in place by the CEP continue to influence French Polynesia's political, social and economic landscape. While French Polynesia's pro-independence movement has gained momentum as a result of these structural imbalances, France has recently allowed local stability to deteriorate for the sake of undermining the voices that threaten its continued sovereign control.

In accordance with France's interpretation of decolonisation, France is attempting to remove the colonial relationship between the mainland and its dependencies. If this process proves to be successful, local societies will be progressively stabilised through the reduction of those social and economic inequalities that foster resentment and mistrust. The Kanak and Maohi populations will come to be less and less marginalised by French funding and development initiatives, and the fostering of multicultural societies will gradually dismantle the bipolar conflict dynamic between Loyalists and Independentists. Further still, a greater proportion of local peoples across different cultures and ethnicities will come to benefit from the high living standards for which the French Pacific dependencies are so well renowned.

But for every action, a reaction: in the same way that France has been shown to be 'emotionally' unmoveable in its desire to prevent the transfer of sovereignty, pro-independence movements are equally unmoveable in their quest to achieve it. For this reason it is unlikely that any amount of territorial rebalancing or advances in

autonomy will satisfy a solid core of Independentists, who perceive sovereign independence as the one and only platform to achieving a co-operative and harmonious post-colonial society. In short, while the colonial *relationship* is being taken away, the colonial *fact* remains.

Former Permanent Secretary for the South Pacific Jean-Jacques Queyranne wrote that “[o]n August 1988, at the Noumea city hall, Prime Minister Rocard said France had to meet a challenge unprecedented since the Second World War, namely that of ‘achieving successful decolonisation within the institutional framework of the French Republic’. I believe it is possible for us to say today that this challenge has been won” (Queyranne, 2000). Is this claim true? The question is perhaps better approached by posing two more questions:

- Should a majority of the populations in New Caledonia or French Polynesia ever democratically express themselves in favour of independence, would France then allow it?
- Moreover, will France ever provide its South Pacific dependencies with the necessary economic, political, and social tools to make independence a worthwhile option in the first place?

Based on an analysis of the situation as it stands at the present day, the author posits the answer in all three cases to be ‘no’. Cordonnier stated in 1995 that “[d]ecolonisation, this inherently difficult to define aspect of foreign policy, is a process that France has not completed in the South Pacific. By maintaining its sovereignty over three territories, it has stopped their process of emancipation *vis-à-vis* the mainland at the limit of independence”. While much has changed since 1995, the essence of this statement – that decolonisation is completed only upon the transfer of sovereignty – remains true to this day.

For as long as France continues to regard decolonisation as an internal matter therefore, it will be required to deal in one way or another with the legitimate political voice of pro-independence groups. If France does not react to calls for independence in a truly impartial way, such groups will ultimately come to perceive their ends as

being better achieved through more confrontational means. For the time being the Noumea Accord in New Caledonia shows signs of promise for future stability. As for French Polynesia, the recent political unrest and the ousting of Oscar Temaru would suggest that the impartiality of France's approach continues to be compromised by its deep-seated desire to retain sovereign control.

But what is sovereignty without wellbeing? The Pacific Island states once perceived continued colonial rule as the source of the region's problems, but they are now learning the harsh lesson that statehood does not necessarily guarantee stability. The view has therefore emerged that the difference between autonomy and independence may have lost its meaning:

In the current global context, does the debate on autonomy or independence of the small island states still have significance? The question is not only posed by those who would be described as 'conservatives'. Michel Rocard, for example, declared "the concept of independence is in the process of disintegrating, notably with respect to its principal aspects of sovereignty, national defence, currency and justice. We are now discovering that independence is the capacity to manage everything that concerns us at home... (Regnault, 2003, 211).

Pérez similarly believes that "[i]n both human and political terms, dependence is no longer an acceptable option today. In a globalised world, independence is not viable either, and will undoubtedly be replaced tomorrow by interdependence" (2004, 103). Indeed, such observations could not be more relevant in the context of the South Pacific, where the "relative failure of their relations with the industrialised world" (Cordonnier, 1995, 208) has forced many Pacific Island states to exchange one form of dependence for another. Whereas these island communities were previously dependent in a political sense, they are now dependent on the aid donations, development assistance and security forces provided by regional and outside powers. The recent experiences of Papua New Guinea and the Solomon Islands for example reveal the enormous divide that can exist between sovereignty and stability in the post-colonial era.

How then is France's relationship with its South Pacific dependencies to be regarded? French funding means that New Caledonia and French Polynesia have comparatively far higher standards of living than all other island states in the South Pacific. If these living standards are accompanied by a durable commitment to rebalancing

inequalities, the destabilisation incurred due to decolonisation-based tensions may prove to be small in relation to the benefits gained through continued French control. Doumenge states in this way that France can serve as an example for “another form of *the Pacific Way*, whereby the substitution of violence with negotiation is achieved through the promotion of a high standard of living enjoyed by as many people as possible” (2002, 112). Furthermore, by grace of the French dependencies the region additionally benefits from having France as an important aid donor. Amaury du Chéné believes that “[f]or all the small states of this zone, France can become the pivot of regional co-operation through the actions of the overseas territories. It is through being a driving force of Pacific Island stability and development...that France can play a wider regional role that goes beyond that of a medium-sized power or of a simple commercial partner” (du_Chéné, 2002, 504).

France is allowing its South Pacific dependencies to progressively become the architects of their own destiny, but what has been shown to be a largely ‘emotional’ determination to retain sovereignty of these lands means they will continue to be threatened by the potential for decolonisation-based instabilities. In light of the above discussion however, would New Caledonia, French Polynesia and Wallis-and-Futuna be truly better off as independent states? At a time when the South Pacific is confronted daily with the challenge of attaining state viability in an increasingly interdependent world, France is manifesting a genuine desire to contribute to the peace and prosperity of the wider region. Continued French sovereignty may thus prove to be a relatively small price to pay for the benefits France can offer as a source of aid, development and stability in the contemporary regional environment.

Appendix 1: Supplementary Information on New Caledonia, French Polynesia and Wallis-and-Futuna

Local Government under the Noumea Accord in New Caledonia

The High Commissioner continues to represent the French government in New Caledonia. The dependency is split administratively into three provinces: the affluent and European-dominated Southern Province; the Kanak-dominated Northern Province, and the Kanak-dominated Islands. Each province has a provincial assembly, elected for five years by direct universal suffrage, and of a size proportional to the relative population of the province (Faberon and Steinmetz, in De Deckker et al. 2004). The 54 members of the territorial Congress are drawn from these provincial assemblies. The Congress elects a ‘collegial’ executive of between six to eleven (six in 1999, ten since 2002) members by proportional representation, meaning that for the first time in New Caledonia’s history executive power is shared between the differing political forces within the Congress. Christnacht states that this disposition aims to convince the two ‘partners’ of the Noumea Accord to work together in a consensual way (2004). By a three-fifths majority, the Congress is able to vote in *lois de pays* or ‘laws of the country’, specifically concerning for example employment rights and immigration (Pitoiset 1999), or the definition of a national anthem or flag (Christnacht 2004). Once again, these measures reflect the Noumea Accord’s principle of a *shared* power arrangement, seeking above all to give the regions greater control over their own affairs by decentralising institutions away from Paris in the first instance, and Noumea in the second.

The New Caledonian government is entitled to conduct a degree of foreign relations separately from France, and can establish diplomatic representation in the Pacific and in the European Union¹³² as well as conclude international agreements in consultation with the French government. New Caledonia is also represented by two elected Deputies in the French National Assembly, and by a Senator in the French Parliament.

¹³² New Zealand Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Trade Website, accessed January 24 2007.

Local Government in French Polynesia

French Polynesia is a parliamentary democracy, with a 49-seat Assembly elected by universal suffrage from its five archipelagoes¹³³ and a 16-member executive. This executive is appointed by the President of the Government, who in turn is elected by a majority vote in the Assembly. Both the President and Assembly members are elected for terms of five years¹³⁴. The 2004 statute instilled an electoral 'majority bonus' system, whereby the party that secures the most votes in a particular electorate gets an extra 30 percent of the seats in that constituency. French Polynesia is represented by two elected Deputies in the French National Assembly, and by a Senator in the French Parliament.

Wallis and Futuna

Population:	14,944 (2003) as well as 17,563 living in New Caledonia (1996 census)
Status:	<i>Collectivité d'outre-mer</i> of France (Overseas Collectivity)
Head of State:	President of the French Republic Jacques Chirac
Chief Administrator:	Xavier de Furst (appointed 15 December 2004) ¹³⁵
Total Land Area:	4,176 sq km (118 islands and atolls in five archipelagos)
Capital:	Mata-Utu (Island of Uvéea)
EEZ:	300,000 sq km ¹³⁶

The island groups of Wallis and Futuna form a small and highly isolated Polynesian territory of France that has remained (relative to New Caledonia and French Polynesia) remarkably unchanged in terms of its status within the French Republic. The Futuna island group was discovered by the Dutch in 1616 and Wallis by the British in 1767, but it was the French who declared a protectorate over the islands in 1842. In 1959, the inhabitants of the islands voted to become a French overseas

¹³³ The Society Archipelago – comprising the *Iles du Vent* (Windward Islands – including the islands of Tahiti and Moorea) and the *Iles Sous le Vent* (Leeward Islands), the Tuamotu Archipelago, the Gambier Islands, the Austral Islands, and the Marquesas Archipelago (Europa 2006, p1797).

¹³⁴ New Zealand Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Trade Website, accessed January 24 2007.

¹³⁵ Europa World Year Book 2006, Wallis and Futuna

¹³⁶ CIA World Factbook, Wallis and Futuna, accessed January 24 2007.

territory. Following amendments to the French Constitution in 2003, Wallis and Futuna was designated as an Overseas Country, with the status of *Collectivité d'outre-mer* (Overseas Collectivity) (Europa, 2006, 1816).

Local Government and Daily Life in Wallis and Futuna

Since 1959 the French Prefect (Senior Administrator) holds executive authority in the territory, except over issues which are traditionally the preserve of customary leaders. The Prefect is responsible to the French Minister for Overseas and is ex-officio President of the Territorial Council, composed of the three Kings (paramount chiefs) of the territory and of three members appointed by the Prefect, with the approval of the elected Territorial Assembly. The Territorial Assembly has 20 members. It has legislative power over a limited range of local matters¹³⁷.

Traditional influences such as custom, royal authority and Catholicism continue to define daily life in Wallis and Futuna. French colonial rule co-exists with a local customary administration, and three Kings exercise authority over their traditional monarchies while receiving salaries from the French government. The local economy is small and subsistence-based, consisting of agriculture, fishing and livestock breeding. It is thus dependent on both French financial transfers and remittances from relatives living in New Caledonia, and the French government directly funds many services (such as health, education and public service salaries) as well as providing a grant each year to balance the budget¹³⁸. In contrast to New Caledonia and French Polynesia, the islands of Wallis and Futuna remain as dependent on French administration, exports and funding as they were in the 1960s, and have not exhibited the same desire for independence.

¹³⁷ Australian Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade Website, accessed January 24 2007.

¹³⁸ Ibid.

Appendix 2: *Saint-Louis*: Inter-ethnic Hostilities in New Caledonia's post-Noumea Accord Environment

It has often been suggested of the Noumea Accord that its goal to unite New Caledonian society is only likely to be realised in the long term. Indeed, despite the agreement's success in perpetuating the general peace established under Matignon, instances of inter-ethnic tension and violence nonetheless remain, and France must continue to play a central role in responding to security threats in New Caledonia. An example of remaining hostilities in the post-Noumea environment and the way in which France chooses to approach them was seen in the Saint-Louis Affair¹³⁹, a recent outbreak of conflict between Kanaks and a community of immigrants from the French overseas territory of Wallis and Futuna¹⁴⁰.

Saint-Louis is a Kanak customary land on the outskirts of Noumea. It neighbours Ave Maria, a Wallisian¹⁴¹ village, and the two communities are separated only by the Thy river that runs between them. Kanaks and Wallisians have historically been divided in New Caledonia along Independentist and Loyalist lines: the Wallisian immigrant community has tended to rally with the Caldoches for preserving New Caledonia within the French Republic, and has at times been mobilised by the Right into security forces to fight against the Independentist cause. This turbulent history has fostered a latent resentment and mistrust between the two communities. While the twenty-three hectares of Wallisian-occupied land had originally been ceded to them by local Kanaks under Oceanic custom, the ever-growing Wallisian population has incited Kanaks to seek their relocation to Noumea and neighbouring suburbs.

Since 2001, disputes and armed clashes have emerged sporadically between Saint-Louis Kanaks and Wallisians over issues of land ownership and customary authority between opposing chieftainships. As of late, however, these tensions have developed

¹³⁹ For a comprehensive account of the Saint-Louis violence and other instances of contemporary New Caledonian conflict, see Nic Maclellan, *Conflict and Reconciliation in New Caledonia: Building the Mwâ Kâ*, Australian National University 2005.

¹⁴⁰ This community of residents from Wallis and Futuna will heretofore be referred to simply as 'Wallisians', the largest of the two islands of the French territory.

into a form of ‘pay-back’ violence scenario between the youths of the two communities, resulting in the frequent setting up of roadblocks, at least three deaths, over a dozen shootings, and countless other wounded (Maclellan, 2005, 9).

The French State acted on the conflicts with a major raid involving more than 250 French police on the Kanak communities in Saint Louis, resulting in the arrest of ten people and the seizing of weapons and ammunition. Finally the government began to enforce an agreement reached in December 2002, undertaking to suitably relocate the Wallisian settler families from the area to new housing in Dumbéa and other suburbs of Noumea. Immediately upon leaving, the outgoing Wallisians set fire to their homes in order to prevent Saint-Louis Kanaks from occupying them. However, this relocation failed to quell the violence: Maclellan notes that many families were made to stay in Ave Maria since insufficient public housing could be found for them in Noumea. Moreover, in June 2003 five people – including a nun and a police officer – were wounded in a clash between rival groups in Saint Louis. In August 2006 yet another brawl between Kanak and Wallisian youths in the suburban town of Dumbéa left one person hospitalised, and required the presence of some thirty French police to restore calm (2006). This incident suggests that the relocation of Wallisian families from Ave Maria may have merely exported the animosity and violence to other Nouméa towns.

Such interventions by the French State have been criticised from both sides of the conflict for differing reasons. The refusal of France to allow for the settling of the conflict through the ‘Pacific Way’ – customary reconciliation through dialogue and consensus – is believed by many commentators to have further exacerbated tensions. Wallisians as well as members of the European Right hit out heavily against the housing relocation initiative, with both the principal Wallisian political party the *Rassemblement Démocratique Océanien* (RDO), and the Loyalist AE claiming that excluding the Wallisian and Futunian community from Ave Maria was tantamount to “ethnic cleansing” (Chappell, 2004). Some leading Kanaks from the area believe that

the tensions may in fact be the result of political baiting by Loyalist supporters,¹⁴² and that the high political stakes involved have thus rendered a resolution to the conflict through the 'Pacific Way' impossible (Maclellan, 2005). In short, there is the legitimate concern that the French State's refusal to recognise customary practice may have permanently galvanised Kanaks and Wallisians against each other. While it must be remembered that control of New Caledonia's security forces rests solely with France, its approach to violent tensions in Saint-Louis nonetheless appears to be inconsistent with its own recognition of the role of custom and customary practices outlined in the Noumea Accord.

The Saint-Louis Affair is an example of on-going tensions in New Caledonia where the contribution of France to date has not been entirely successful. While clearly willing to resolve conflicts on its soil, France would be well advised to employ conflict resolution methods that are both impartial and perceived as legitimate by all parties involved, lest it be criticised for flaring up tensions even further. For example, is it truly acceptable in the post-Noumea Accord environment to attempt the relocation of an entire immigrant community at the behest of the indigenous population? While the Noumea Accord is undeniably aimed first and foremost at ending the Independentist/Loyalist conflict dichotomy, New Caledonian society will only be truly united when the welfare and wishes of *all* peoples are accounted for. The issue of what place minority communities living in New Caledonia should occupy under the Noumea Accord is therefore likely to become more pertinent as Kanak and Caldoche-related tensions subside. Notwithstanding the efforts of New Caledonians themselves, the success of the Noumea Accord in the long term will likely depend on the ability of France to juggle the difficult issues of impartially securing peace, recognising custom, and respecting the rights of all communities in New Caledonia. It is only under these conditions that the goal of uniting the New Caledonian people can be realised.

¹⁴² According to former FLNKS President Roch Wamytan conflict in Saint-Louis may be desired by the Right in order to show that independence is not a viable option in New Caledonia (Maclellan 2005).

Appendix 3: Recent Political Developments and Problems with ‘Collegiality’ in New Caledonia

Evolutions at the local political level will undoubtedly have a large influence on the success of the Noumea Accord process. In keeping with the concept of ‘shared sovereignty,’ the Organic Law of 1999 established a local government in New Caledonia that must “collegially” exercise its functions: that is to say, an executive composed of several members from different political backgrounds exercising together the power of decision¹⁴³ (Jean, 2000, 305). Since that time however the criticism has emerged that the collegiality provision has not been upheld, and that decision-making has for the most part been conserved by the predominant party.

As Patrice Jean has noted, the notion of a collegial democracy that respects and associates the Opposition in decision-making may be highly desirable in theory, but somewhat lofty in practice (2000, 305). Nonetheless, the failure to co-operate at the government level carries the seed of top-down generated instability. Pitoiset posits that the failure to evenly distribute powers at the executive level jeopardises the wider goal of societal unification: “the autonomists remain in the majority. If they do not manage to share the responsibilities in the spirit of the Noumea Accord, the Independentists will have a lot of trouble calming the ardent demands of the Kanaks, disappointed to have not acceded to the independence that they have been waiting for since 1988” (1999, 216). France must therefore act as the vigilant guarantor of the collegiality provision for the duration of the Noumea Accord process, lest allegations of power-sharing difficulties evolve into more serious tensions on the ground.

More recently, power changes at the local government level have created further problems for collegiality. In 2004, an epic political upheaval took place when the May 9 provincial elections saw the former vanguard of New Caledonian politics, the RPCR, lose its majority for the first time both in the 40-seat Southern Province stronghold and in the Territorial Congress. A new political movement

¹⁴³ This provision was motivated out of the desire to see greater Kanak input in the Southern Province, which has historically been dominated by Caldoche Loyalists, and which commands the majority of seats in the Territorial Congress and the Executive.

named *Avenir Ensemble*¹⁴⁴ or ‘United Future’ emerged the surprise winner of the elections, taking 19 seats in the Southern Province and 16 in the Congress¹⁴⁵. After a period of intense power jockeying between the RPCR and AE to establish ultimate control within the Executive, an eleven-member government finally emerged, composed of four ministers from AE, four from the RPCR, two from UNI-FLNKS, and one from UC. Further jostling finally eventuated in AE’s Marie-Noëlle Thémereau being appointed as Territorial President, while pro-independence Déwé Gorodey was returned as Vice-President. Unfortunately, this two-way split of the anti-Independentist faction within the Executive poses further difficulties for the condition of collegiality in decision-making. The unforeseeable split in the Loyalist camp has thus rendered the collegial approach to formulating decisions on New Caledonia’s future immensely more difficult, and has heightened the risk of a potentially irreconcilable split along party lines.

¹⁴⁴ *Avenir Ensemble* is a party of mostly anti-independence leaders, some of whom are dissidents from the RPCR.

¹⁴⁵ De Deckker observes that “the change in the majority of the Southern Province can be explained by the erosion of power experienced by Jacques Lafleur, as well as by the fact that a new generation of politicians have sought to achieve a transformation of the power base by advocating increased social justice, increased equality, and an increased sharing of resources” (2004).

Appendix 4: Anti-Nuclearism, Independentists and Autonomists in French Polynesia

The Link between the Anti-nuclear and Independence movements

Ever since nuclear testing began in French Polynesia, opposition to the CEP has at all times been very closely tied to a rejection of France's control over the territory¹⁴⁶. Indeed, the former fuels the latter, and vice-versa: to local inhabitants, the French presence *on the whole* cannot be separated from its most significant and most controversial policy in the territory. Both the anti-nuclear and independence movements have been major actors – and indeed have often banded together – in many instances of French Polynesian conflict. For this reason, in many instances of conflict in the post-CEP French Polynesia it is exceedingly difficult to differentiate those actors who oppose the CEP from those who oppose the French presence in general.

Nonetheless, opposition to the French presence had existed in French Polynesia long before the arrival of the CEP. In particular, a co-ordinated political movement to reject France's tutelage over the territory has existed ever since the late 1940s when Pouvanaa a Oopa, “the father of Polynesian nationalism and autonomy” (Regnault, 2005, 10), sought to radically modify the relationship between France and the *Etablissements français d'Océanie* (EFO)¹⁴⁷. Since then, the nature and intensity of the resistance movement have changed in accordance with evolving political trends and the arrival of the testing programme. For example, the quest for outright independence was pushed off the political agenda in the early years of the programme due to both new-found prosperity and French government pressure, with the only ‘opposition’ to France's presence expressed instead by those in pursuit of greater autonomy (Henningham, 1992, 133). Explicit pro-independence sentiment however re-emerged progressively over the 1970s and 1980s, notably through the progression of French Polynesia's most prominent force within the wider independence

¹⁴⁶ Let it be recalled that ‘a rejection of France's control over the territory’ may be expressed in the form of a demand for total independence, or in the form of a demand for greater autonomy.

¹⁴⁷ For reading on the early years of Tahitian nationalism and resistance to the French presence, see Stephen Henningham, *France and the South Pacific: a Contemporary Analysis*, Allen & Unwin 1992; Jean-Marc Regnault, *Le Pouvoir Confisqué en Polynésie Française : l'Affrontement Temaru-Flosse*, Les Indes Savantes 2005.

movement, *Tavini Huiraatira*¹⁴⁸. Maclellan and Chesneaux illustrate the strong link between anti-CEP sentiment and Independentist sentiment in stating that “[f]or *Tavini*, the rejection of the French nuclear tests was inseparable from the demand for independence: French sovereignty is identified with Moruroa” (1998, 133). Regnault states that “[u]ndeniably, the resumption of nuclear testing reinvigorated the demand for independence. The protests – well beyond the work of merely the *Tavini* – normalised the contestation of the French presence” (Regnault, 2005, 69). Therefore, the CEP has not only threatened French Polynesian stability through the emergence of an anti-nuclear movement, but it also threatened stability through the crystallisation of sentiment that opposed French sovereignty in general.

The Autonomists

The political weight of the anti-independence movement and the Independentists is counterbalanced however by the *Autonomists*. Like Independentists, Autonomists may theoretically disagree with many aspects of French policy in French Polynesia, but they differ in the sense that they do not seek a total French withdrawal from the dependency. Instead, they seek to benefit from the advantages obtained through continued attachment to France (historical cultural links, economic incentives, security provided by a military power, support in territorial administration) whilst nonetheless arguing for a large degree of freedom to manage their own affairs within the wider French Republic.

The best example of Autonomist sentiment is illustrated in the example of Gaston Flosse. Throughout his career Flosse has constantly entered into local political battle on behalf of France and the CEP, seeking to defend the French presence in French Polynesia. However he has not always been an Autonomist, and while he is now its central proponent, he in fact began his political life fighting against the concept of autonomy. As Maclellan and Chesneaux illustrate, “Flosse is the archetype of the Polynesian-style political boss. Without ever calling into question the principle of French sovereignty or criticising the CEP’s presence, he adroitly plays his role as a *demi* to set himself up as a defender of the territory’s interests. At one time Flosse

¹⁴⁸ *Tavini* was originally formed in 1977 as the *Front de Libération de la Polynésie* (Liberation Front of Polynesia, ‘FLP’).

denounced any moves to autonomy, but he now defends the current autonomy statute against the growing push for independence” (1998, 123).

Flosse and the Tahoera’a were the political opponents of the Autonomists prior to 1980. Autonomy, they argued, would jeopardise French Polynesia’s long and amicable relationship with France, and would moreover represent the thin end of the wedge for an eventual independence. In the background however Flosse was secretly preparing for a drastic change of stance, and from 1980 onwards he sought to win over the Autonomist electorate with his own brand of autonomy, a “super-autonomy” (Shineberg, 1988, 89) that went further than that of the ‘Autonomists’ themselves. Regnault accounts for this move by explaining that

before the Second World War, the elites of the country already wanted autonomy, a way for them to escape the overly constraining French social laws that would have limited their prosperity. With Pouvanaa came an autonomism that sought on the contrary to protect the popular categories, for example by demanding that France...apply the metropolitan social laws in the territory. The autonomists of yesteryear became violently anti-autonomist and took refuge behind the French flag...**The strength of Gaston Flosse was the moment of attaining (or to make it appear that he had attained) the reconciliation of the two historical autonomisms in making the necessity for a large redistribution understood, and in making use of the control of the political demand for autonomy** (2005, 85) [emphasis added].

This change in tactics was denounced by critics as flagrant political opportunism, but was countered by Flosse as merely the expression of changing political circumstances. Flosse argued that not only was autonomy no longer an ‘antechamber to independence’, but that autonomy was now in fact the only way that the progression of the pro-independence movement could be stopped (Regnault, 2005, 86). Nonetheless, Flosse’s change in ideology caused an uproar, and his request for a statute of internal autonomy for French Polynesia in March 1980 was only finally granted when Jacques Chirac himself – then leader of the French Gaullist party RPR¹⁴⁹ – offered his support. Ever since this time, Flosse has striven for increasingly extensive autonomy frameworks.

¹⁴⁹ *Rassemblement Pour la République*, ‘Rally for the Republic’.

Henningham observes that “[t]he adoption by Flosse and the Tahoera’a of a pro-autonomist position meant that a large majority of the territory’s elected representatives now favoured autonomy, whereas only a small minority favoured independence” (Henningham, 1992, 141). Flosse’s gamble paid off: he appropriated the ideology of his autonomist adversaries to put himself in the office of Territorial President, and neutralised the threat of the Independentists in one fell swoop.

Appendix 5: France, Flosse and Temaru: Political Destabilisation in French Polynesia following the Territorial Elections of May 2004

From the outset of the territorial elections of May 23 2004, France sent an additional three hundred mobile gendarmes to back up the security forces already present in French Polynesia, amidst fears that political rivalries would escalate into violence (2004a). The French Minister for Overseas Territories and Collectivities Brigitte Girardin was alleged by a local newspaper to have told Flosse that France would *couper les robinets* or “turn off the taps” if Temaru took power – a quote the Minister later denied (Chappell, 2005, 199). The implication here was that the various privileges that French Polynesians received under the stewardship of Gaston Flosse would be revoked under Oscar Temaru, and while the quote was admittedly denied, it would however set the tone for a series of attempts by the Franco-Flosse alliance to ‘confiscate’¹⁵⁰ power from the newly elected President and his majority coalition.

Jean-Marc Regnault refers to the pressure personally applied by French Minister for Overseas¹⁵¹ Brigitte Girardin to Nicole Bouteau and Philip Schyle (the heads of the two crucial pro-autonomy parties) to align themselves with Gaston Flosse (2005). “The electoral process,” Girardin riposted immediately after the election in May, “is far from over” (Gonschor, 2006, 135). Girardin then attempted to influence public opinion by making use of an interpretation of the raw electoral results that had been produced by the Tahoera’a party. This interpretation, claiming that Temaru’s coalition obtained 43,610 votes whereas the Tahoera’a obtained 67,704, unjustifiably including the votes obtained by Bouteau and Schyle’s respective autonomist parties, when in truth they were firmly opposed to the Tahoera’a (Regnault, 2005). Bouteau and Schyle resisted such meddling, but evidence of this pressure was seen elsewhere. For

¹⁵⁰ As per the title of Jean-Marc Regnault’s book: *Confiscated Power in French Polynesia*.

¹⁵¹ The Minister for Overseas, *le Ministre d’Outre-Mer*, was formerly known as the Minister for DOM-TOM (Overseas Departments and Territories) but underwent a change in nomenclature when some of France’s dependencies, and more notably New Caledonia, transcended the appellation of ‘overseas territory’ to become either ‘overseas collectivities’ or ‘overseas countries’. The French Minister for Overseas is not to be confused with the French Foreign Minister.

example, Emile Vernaumon, who had been on the UPLD list in the May elections, suspiciously changed allegiance to run as the Tahoera'a candidate in the ballot for Territorial Assembly President (Chappell, 2005).

Temaru's majority was eventually overcome after two members of his government were enticed into changing camp. This 'musical chairs' style of politics is common in French Polynesia, where politicians opportunistically change political allegiance for either the benefit of their communes or for self-serving ends¹⁵². Flosse was successfully able to file a censure motion against the new government on October 9. Not surprisingly, the rapidity of this toppling of Temaru, the suspicious circumstances surrounding the censure motion, and the apparent complicity of Paris in the affair made the atmosphere extremely tense on the ground. A huge crowd assembling around 22,000 protesters took to the streets of French Polynesia on October 16 to demand that France acknowledge the victory that came out of the ballot boxes. Gaston Flosse was again elected Territorial President on October 22. Meanwhile, Temaru and his minority coalition ensconced themselves inside the presidential grounds, and engaged in a short-lived hunger strike to reinforce their demand for a dissolution of the Territorial Assembly and the holding of new elections.

In a farcical situation, both the recognised President Flosse and the former President Temaru continued to claim they were in charge of French Polynesia, with both 'governments' holding council of ministers meetings and both occupying public offices. One of the four Socialist Deputies from metropolitan France who took part in the Tahiti protest march, Bernard Roman, described the situation as "an institutional and political crisis of certain gravity" (2004b). The Pacific Islands Forum Secretariat decided to postpone a fact-finding mission to the troubled land, on the basis of a recommendation by France that it would be better to undertake the mission at a later stage when the situation had stabilised (2004).

¹⁵² Regnault states in his chapter on French Polynesian politics that "ideology, in the western sense, is absent from political debate", and that "the Right/Left division barely has any relevance in French Polynesia" (2005).

The Dissolution of the Windward Islands Elections

A solution to this heated political impasse eventually came in the form of a request lodged by Flosse after the May 23 elections that they should be annulled, but only in the constituency of the Windward Islands. Flosse claimed that the colours of the curtains in the polling booths in the municipality of Mahina could have influenced the voters, thereby necessitating a fresh poll. Temaru also sought for new general elections to be held, believing that fresh elections would reveal the true will of the Polynesian people – to affect *Tau'i* or 'political change' – thereby undoing the damage caused by Flosse's censure motion. On the other hand, Flosse merely sought for the elections in the Windward Islands to be re-held because he wanted the benefit of the 'majority bonus' that had gone to Temaru's coalition: Temaru's UPLD ticket outpolled the Tahoera'a by a mere 291 votes out of the 85,206 votes cast, giving the UPLD 24 of the 37 seats available in the constituency and leaving the Tahoera'a with only 11. Flosse felt that the scale – and subsequently the electoral bonus – would likely tip in his favour if the election were restaged. It was up for debate however whether the Council of State would uniquely nullify the election in the Windward Islands, at the request of Flosse, or whether it would call for fresh elections across the entire dependency, at the request of Temaru. The French Council of State finally upheld Flosse's request and issued an "obviously ridiculous" (Gonschor, 2005) ruling on November 15 2004 to nullify the elections held in Windward Islands, finding that there had been "manoeuvring" on the election day, thereby necessitating an enormously important by-election to be held on February 13 2005. The Council subsequently upheld Flosse's election as President, while Temaru continued unsuccessfully to have the Territorial Assembly dissolved and stage new general elections throughout French Polynesia (Tahitipresse, 2004). Gonschor commented that "[w]ith this one-sided action, the council once more demonstrated that the French authorities were not behaving neutrally" (2006, 137).

The end of the year 2004 and the beginning of 2005 was thus characterised by two ferociously opposed campaigns of aggressive political lobbying in anticipation for the impending Windward Islands by-election. Tempers flared in Papeete: amidst further demonstrations and rallies assembling tens of thousands of French Polynesians there were isolated instances of violence. For example, a woman supporting Gaston Flosse was assaulted in the staunchly pro-Temaru Commune of Faa'a while participating in a

political motorcade (Tahitipresse, 2005g). Journalists covering the election on the ground felt that if Gaston Flosse were to win the election the tensions felt by Temaru's supporters would boil over into more sustained conflict (ABC, 2005).

A substantial amount of tension and discord over the French Polynesian situation was also evident between politicians in Paris, with allegations coming from Socialist party members that the conservative UMP-led government was demonstrating patent bias towards Flosse and the Tahoera'a. While on the one hand the government had consistently agreed to all requests stemming from Flosse, including the 2004 autonomy statute and the current request for a new by-election; on the other hand it had consistently rejected all requests stemming from Temaru. Even France's centre-right Union for French Democracy (UDF) party criticised France's lack of impartiality (Tahitipresse, 2005c). The response from Minister Girardin was always that the government remained strictly neutral in the affair (Tahitipresse, 2002). At the same time however metropolitan UMP politicians openly supported Flosse, and attempted to distil the discourse surrounding the rivalry into an overly simplistic pro-or-anti France dichotomy. UMP Vice President Eric Raoult said that "[t]he choice is simple for French Polynesia: UMP Senator Gaston Flosse proposes a change with France; Mr. Oscar Temaru, supporter of independence from France, calls for upheaval through independence" (Tahitipresse, 2005d). Patrick Antoine Decloitre wrote in light of the bitter opposition unfolding in Tahiti that the situation resembled a small-scale replica of national French politics. Both Temaru's liberal party and Flosse's conservative party had allied themselves perfectly with their respective 'big brother' parties in metropolitan France, and it was even suggested that metropolitan politicians were treating the Tahiti by-election as a means of rallying support ahead of the next presidential elections in 2007 (Decloitre, 2005d).

Appendix 6: Recent French Diplomacy in the South Pacific

The easing of tensions in New Caledonia and the end of nuclear testing have paved the way for France to actively renovate its image as a stabilising force and a constructive player in the South Pacific. This goal has been pursued through a combination of initiatives: the hosting of France-Oceania Summits¹⁵³; pro-active regional diplomacy¹⁵⁴; overseas development assistance and involvement in regional organisations and regional initiatives¹⁵⁵, and encouragement that the French Pacific dependencies become better integrated into the wider region. Now more than ever France is presenting itself as a constructive regional player that is cognisant of regional sensibilities.

France and the Pacific Islands Forum

An important example of France's desire to achieve a better insertion in the region was its endorsement that New Caledonia and French Polynesia obtain observer status at the Pacific Islands Forum, obtained in 1999 and 2004 respectively. The dependencies had historically been kept at a distance by the Forum over the 1980s and 1990s, due to the combination of tensions in New Caledonia and the nuclear testing programme in French Polynesia. France's opinion of the Forum was equally unflattering after the United Nations acted upon the Forum's diplomatic push to declare New Caledonia a "non-self-governing territory" in 1986, paving the way for its reinscription onto the United Nations Special Committee's list of Non-Self Governing territories to be decolonised on December 3 of the same year¹⁵⁶. After France removed these confrontational aspects of its policy, New Caledonia and French Polynesia were granted observer status, allowing them to be present at Forum-

¹⁵³ The inaugural France-Oceania Summit was held in Paris in 2003; the second held in 2006. See http://www.diplomatie.gouv.fr/en/country-files_156/oceania_3712/second-france-oceania-summit-june-26-2006_5064.html

¹⁵⁴ For detailed analyses see Maclellan and Chesneaux 1998, Bates 1990, Cordonnier 1995, McCallum 1993.

¹⁵⁵ See http://www.diplomatie.gouv.fr/en/country-files_156/oceania_3712/the-oceania-region-and-regional-cooperation-organizations_5062.html

¹⁵⁶ For a comprehensive account of the reinscription of New Caledonia onto the UN list read chapter 6 of Stephen Hoadley, *New Zealand and France: Politics, Diplomacy and Dispute Management*, N.Z.I.I.A 2005.

related meetings, and consequently facilitating the mutual familiarisation of these long estranged entities with their regional neighbours.

At the 2006 Forum meeting in Nadi, New Caledonia and French Polynesia acceded to the newly created status of 'associate members,' indicative of a more open approach on the part of the Forum to those non-sovereign territories in the region (Oceania_Flash, 2006a). Indeed, the Forum's new approach could in itself be interpreted as a warming of the relationship between France and the South Pacific. The associate member status allows New Caledonia and French Polynesia to participate in Forum debates for the first time, though voting continues to be reserved for those with 'full member' status, which remains unavailable to non-sovereign nations. The third French Pacific dependency of Wallis and Futuna has also been invited by the Forum to apply for observer status, and will likely accede to this at the Forum of 2008. The then French Overseas Minister François Baroin stated that "[m]ore and more, we are inciting our territories to enter regional cooperation agreements with neighbouring countries. I believe our countries and territories' development can only happen through their better insertion in the region" (Oceania_Flash, 2006a).

Overseas Development Assistance

France also contributes to stability through its aid programmes and contributions to regional organisations, which have considerably increased in both size and scope since the dark days of the 1980s. An alternative opinion has emerged however that French aid has been a political device to buy favourable regional opinions, under the theory of 'cheque-book diplomacy'¹⁵⁷. Nevertheless, a round table meeting held at the French National Assembly in 1996 between France and the South Pacific states outlined "the will of the French government to not just content itself with mere words when it comes to solidarity with the countries of the South Pacific" (1996, 49). Bilateral aid is principally allocated through the Economic, Social and Cultural Cooperation Fund for the Pacific, commonly known as the *Pacific Fund*, established in 1986 in order to finance various bilateral and regional projects through the form of grants. One of the Fund's objectives is also to promote and boost stronger ties between

¹⁵⁷ For an alternative perspective on French aid see Wayne Stuart McCallum, 'Franco-Fijian Détente – Cheque Book Diplomacy?' in *New Zealand International Review* (date unknown).

the French Pacific dependencies and their South Pacific regional neighbours. This, in combination with a degree of financing of the Pacific Community and the Pacific Islands Forum, reflects “[France’s] desire to not stay egoistically confined in our territories, but on the contrary to open ourselves up to the different micro-states of the region” (Franceschi, 1998, 50). Since this time France has further advanced its aid strategy in order to better assist the development of the region. At the France-Oceania Summit in 2003 President Chirac announced France’s plan to increase its official development assistance to the Pacific region by 50% before 2007, including a two-fold funding increase to the Pacific Fund from 2004 (Chirac, 2003).

France in the European Union

France plays a further role as aid-donor through its membership in the European Union, whose European Development Fund (EDF) finances development initiatives in ACP countries (African, Caribbean and the Pacific, including of Papua New Guinea, The Solomon Islands, Vanuatu, Fiji, Tuvalu, Tonga, Western Samoa and Kiribati), as well as those overseas territories of EU member states. France is the sole embodiment of the European Union in the South Pacific, and President Chirac has pledged France’s commitment to arguing on the region’s behalf for further EDF funding. France is the leading contributor to the EDF, providing around one quarter of its funding resources. Currently, the amount that France provides to the Pacific through this fund currently stands at 26 million euros per year¹⁵⁸. The French Ambassador to New Zealand posited the total amount of French aid to the region (its contribution to the EDF combined with bilateral aid) in 2006 to be at NZ \$60 million per annum¹⁵⁹.

Regional Organisations and Agreements

In addition to aid, France is increasingly establishing itself as an actor eager to confront regional problems through its involvement in international agreements and co-operation initiatives. This began with France’s adhesion to the 1996 Treaty of Rarotonga that established a nuclear-weapon-free zone in the South Pacific, a largely symbolic move that was nonetheless a welcomed turn-around from its previous policy. France has also made a significant regional contribution through its membership since 1992 in FRANZ: an agreement between France, Australia and New

¹⁵⁸ French Ministry of Foreign Affairs website, http://www.diplomatie.gouv.fr/en/country-files_156/oceania_3712/france-and-oceania_5063.html (accessed January 5 2006).

¹⁵⁹ ‘France in the South Pacific,’ a presentation by French Ambassador to New Zealand S.E.M Jean-Michel Marlaud, Department of European Studies, University of Canterbury 2006.

Zealand for the co-ordination of resources in the event of natural disasters¹⁶⁰. In April 2006, for example, New Zealand and France concluded an agreement to finance rebuilding efforts on the island of Niue, which was devastated by tropical cyclone Heta in January 2004. Under an arrangement thought to be the first of its kind, France directly provided the New Zealand Agency for International Development (NZAID) with 530,000 euros to be used in conjunction with the Agency's own contribution for rebuilding assistance (Decloitre, 2006a). The FRANZ agreement has also been expanded to encompass maritime surveillance initiatives, whereby French naval vessels and Air Force patrols are committed alongside those of Australia and New Zealand toward the protection of the region's substantial EEZs against illegal fishing as well as in co-operative military training exercises. A joint exercise hosted in May 2006 by the French armed forces in New Caledonia brought together soldiers from around the region to better prepare for interventions in island states during periods of civil unrest (Oceania_Flash, 2006d). France is also member of the Coral Reef Initiative for the South Pacific (CRISP), the Pacific Regional Endeavour for an Appropriate Response to Epidemics (PREPARE), counter-terrorism and security initiatives instigated by the Pacific Islands Forum as well as numerous agreements pertaining to regional fisheries¹⁶¹.

In a more notable example of regional co-operation, France offered to commit troops to RAMSI, the Australian-led Regional Assistance Mission to the Solomon Islands¹⁶². Reports emerged however that this offer was rebuffed by Australian Prime Minister John Howard, amid rumours he believed France's involvement would appear 'neo-colonial'¹⁶³. If this rebuff can be interpreted as evidence of a hint of wariness remaining from past tensions, then France's offer to participate in an Australian-headed initiative is nonetheless evidence of a renewed and more constructive approach. In any case, France strongly lobbied the European Union for an aid package

¹⁶⁰ See http://www.ambafrance-nz.org/rubrique.php3?id_rubrique=211

¹⁶¹ The 2006 France-Oceania Summit outlined as a goal the implementation of "the Australia-France-New Zealand Declaration of Cooperation on Maritime Surveillance and Combating Illegal, Unreported and Unregulated Fishing in the Pacific Islands Region, European programmes PROCFISH (ACP and OCT Pacific Regional and Coastal Fisheries Development Programme) and DEVFISH (Development of Tuna Fisheries in the Pacific ACP), and continue to develop the South Pacific Regional Fisheries Management Organisation (RFMO)".

¹⁶² Interview with Permanent Secretary/Ambassador for the South Pacific S.E.M. Bruno Gain, Paris, 19 December 2005.

¹⁶³ Ibid. France understood that Australian Foreign Minister Alexander Downer was receptive to a French contribution, whereas Prime Minister Howard was not.

to the Solomon Islands, which subsequently received 85 million euros of EU assistance¹⁶⁴.

An Official's Perspective on France's Role in the South Pacific: an Interview with former French Ambassador for the South Pacific Bruno Gain

An interview conducted with recent French Ambassador for the South Pacific Bruno Gain reveals the extent to which France's approach to the region has evolved over the period of enquiry. With regard to its approach toward its own territories, France's most important rule of late is that everything must obtain the agreement of local populations. This can be contrasted with the approach taken prior to 1988 when France intervened for purposes of *raison d'état* – such as the CEP or the military enforcement of sovereign control – with little to no regard for the approval of local communities. In the wider region, France now places an emphasis on multilateral approaches to regional stability, in a tone of “modesty and discretion.” France is aware of its delicate position in the Pacific, having come across as the “black sheep” in past years, and is thus mindful not to dredge up old memories through unilateral action. Therefore, France would seek to obtain the firm support of regional leaders Australia and New Zealand before acting on regional conflict situations.

France nonetheless continues to view regional circumstances through a distinctly franco-centric prism, and has reservations over the eminence of the Pacific Islands Forum at the expense of another regional body, the Secretariat Pacific Community (SPC)¹⁶⁵. France prefers the non-political character of the SPC, and while realistically aware of the pre-eminence of the Forum in regional relations, it is nonetheless frustrated that it has thus far been denied a greater role within the organisation. As a country with a long historical presence in the region, France feels that that it should not be made to take its place alongside nations such as Israel or Canada in the post-Forum dialogue group. For this reason, France is “very reticent” about the suggestion

¹⁶⁴ Ibid.

¹⁶⁵ Formerly known as the ‘South Pacific Community,’ the SPC Headquarters are located in Noumea, with a second branch in Suva.

that the PC and the Forum should be melded together¹⁶⁶, fearing that France and its territories would be relegated to the “cheap-seats” under such an arrangement.

Turning the Page in the South Pacific Region

Nevertheless, elements of discord now appear to be fading into the background of the overall relationship, and France’ pro-active involvement in the South Pacific has by and large been well received. Papua New Guinea Prime Minister Sir Michael Somare, the Pacific Islands Forum Chairman for 2006, applauded France’s “helpful efforts” in integrating its Pacific dependencies, stating his belief that France’s standing and attitude within the Pacific region had “completely changed over the past ten years,” and that “[t]here is a good sense of honesty in how France now deals with the Pacific... Indications are that this relationship is on a progressive path. This time, there is a real commitment to help us” (Oceania_Flash, 2006a). Certainly, France’s new focus on being a good neighbour, in combination with the return to relative calm in its Pacific dependencies, has facilitated more favourable opinions on the French presence in the region. Perez states that “[t]hese marked changes in French attitude towards the South Pacific have been welcomed by most regional politicians and the press alike, and the improved knowledge of France’s activities in the area, and of the social and political realities of the French territories, has gone a long way in restoring France’s image in this part of the world” (Pérez, 2004, 100). Regional newspaper Oceania Flash wrote that the second France-Oceania Summit, held in Paris in June 2006, “has been regarded as heralding a new era in the relationships between France, the Pacific islands and two of its largest countries, Australia and New Zealand” (Oceania_Flash, 2006g).

¹⁶⁶ See also Paul De Deckker, ‘New Caledonia: yesterday, today and tomorrow,’ a paper presented at the Otago Foreign Policy School, University of Otago 2004.

Appendix 7: French Military Forces in the South Pacific

The French military forces in the Pacific fall are categorised as 'sovereignty forces' within the French army structure. In August 2005, French forces in the Pacific comprised:

1. 180 troops in the regional maritime zone;
2. 2400 troops in French Polynesia;
3. 2700 troops in New Caledonia.

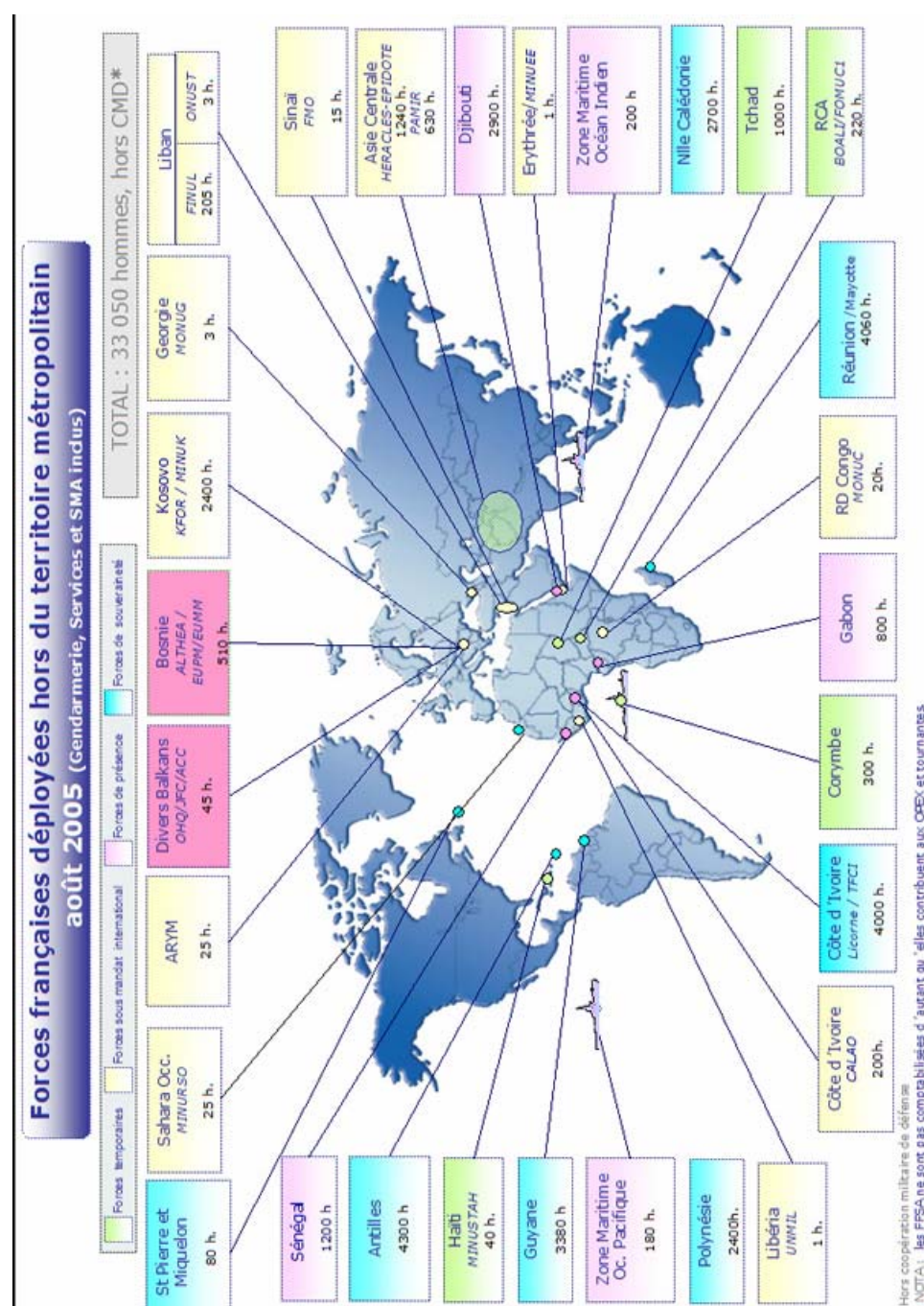


Figure 2: France's Global Military Engagement (French Ministry of Defence Website 2006)

Glossary

Autonomist: a *Loyalist* who wants their dependency to be granted autonomy from France

Caldoche: New Caledonian of French lineage who now identifies New Caledonia as their home

Demi: French Polynesian of mixed French and Polynesian lineage

Dependency: an entity separated geographically from the French mainland over which France exercises sovereign control

Front de Libération Nationale Kanak et Socialiste (FLNKS): ‘Kanak National Socialist Liberation Front’; the pre-eminent Independentist party in New Caledonia.

Independentist: an inhabitant of the French Pacific seeking the independence of their dependency – or of all the dependencies – from France

Kanak: the indigenous people of New Caledonia

Loyalist: an inhabitant of the French Pacific who wants their dependency – or all of the dependencies – to remain part(s) of France

Maohi: the indigenous people of French Polynesia

Matignon Accords: New Caledonian peace agreements concluded between the *FLNKS*, the *RPCR* and the French State in 1988

Ministère d’Outre-Mer: ‘Ministry for Overseas’ – the French national administration in charge of France’s overseas satellites. Formerly known as the *Ministère des DOM-TOM*, ‘Ministry of Overseas Departments and Territories’

Noumea Accord: New Caledonian peace agreement concluded between the *FLNKS*, the *RPCR* and the French State in 1998

Rassemblement Pour la Calédonie dans la République (RPCR): ‘Rally for Caledonia in the Republic’; the pre-eminent Loyalist party in New Caledonia. Known since 2002 as the **Rassemblement-UMP**

Rheebu Nuu: Kanak environmentalist group in New Caledonia

Tahoera’a Huiraatira: ‘*Rassemblement du Peuple*’, ‘Rally of the People’, the pre-eminent pro-France political party in French Polynesia

Tavini Huiraatira: ‘*Servir le Peuple*’, ‘Serve the People’, the pre-eminent pro-independence party in French Polynesia. Formerly known as the *Front de Libération de la Polynésie*, ‘[French] Polynesian Liberation Front’ or FLP

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